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TRENDS JOURNAL

HISTORY BEFORE IT HAPPENS®

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About the TRENDS JOURNAL

Gerald Celente is the Founder/Director of the Trends Research Institute and Publisher of the weekly **Trends Journal** magazine. He is the author of the highly acclaimed and best-selling books *Trend Tracking* and *Trends 2000* (Warner Books).

With a 45-year track record of identifying, tracking, and forecasting trends, Celente is world-renowned as today's #1 Trend Forecaster. Celente has earned the reputation as a trusted name in trends for his many accurate forecasts; among them the 1987 Stock Market crash, Dot com bust, "Gold Bull Run," the "Panic of '08," the rise of organic foods, and the popularity of gourmet coffee long before Starbucks was a household name.

Self-described as a "Warrior for the Prince of Peace," Gerald Celente is also the Founder "Occupy Peace & Freedom," a not-for-profit movement to honor the Constitution and Bill of Rights and restore Freedoms.

INSIDE

TRENDS ON THE ECONOMIC AND MARKET FRONT 6

ECONOMIC UPDATE - MARKET OVERVIEW 6
LAST WEEK: A STUMBLE, THEN A BOUNCE TO A NEW RECORD 9
JANUARY'S LAYOFFS THE MOST IN 17 YEARS 19
JOBLESS CLAIMS RISE MORE THAN EXPECTED 21
U.S. MANUFACTURING IS IN A "JOBS RECESSION" 22
OLDER AMERICANS ARE "UN-RETIRING" TO PAY THE BILLS 24
FOUR AI GIANTS ANNOUNCE $660 BILLION IN 2026 CAPITAL COSTS 25
FED NOMINEE SEES AI AS PRODUCTIVITY BOON FOR U.S. ECONOMY 26
WEAK U.S. HOUSING MARKET HANDS BUYERS THE ADVANTAGE 29
WALMART JOINS THE TRILLION-DOLLAR CLUB 30

TRENDS ON THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC FRONT 32

WHEN THE ECONOMY FALLS, JOBS GO WITH IT 32
GOING OUT OF BUSINESS TRENDS 35
GERMANY LOST MORE THAN $1 TRILLION IN GDP OUTPUT SINCE COVID WAR, AS NEARLY 70 PERCENT OF GERMANS DISAPPROVE OF MERZ 38
EUROPE'S BIGGEST ASSET MANAGER SHUNS INVESTMENTS IN THE U.S. 40
GOLD'S PRICE WILL REMAIN ALOFT THIS YEAR, ANALYSTS SAY 41
ECB HOLDS INTEREST RATE STEADY 43
BANK OF ENGLAND NARROWLY FREEZES KEY INTEREST RATE 44
THE LUXURY INDUSTRY'S KEY MARKET RETURNS, SORT OF 45
KPMG WANGLES DISCOUNT ON ITS AUDIT, CLAIMING AI CUT THE COST 49
TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU 50
STELLANTIS WRITES OFF $26.5 BILLION AS SHIFT TO EVs STALLS 50

SPOTLIGHT: BIGS GETTING BIGGER 54
SANTANDER BUYS AN ENLARGED U.S. PRESENCE 54
FEDEX HEADS GROUP BUYING PARCEL LOCKER BUSINESS FOR $9.2 BILLION 55
SWISS INSURANCE GIANT WILL TAKE OVER BRITISH COUNTERPART 56
TEXAS INSTRUMENTS BUYS COMPLEMENTARTY CHIP MAKER FOR $7.5 BILLION 57
TWO MORE MINERS MERGE 57
KKR FINALIZES PURCHASE OF SPORTS INVESTING FIRM 58

THE ISRAEL WAR 59

ISRAELI INVADERS TERRORIZE WEST BANK VILLAGES, IDF LOOKED ON 59
NO OUTRAGE: ISRAEL RAMPS UP AIR ATTACKS ON LEBANON, DESPITE CEASEFIRE 64
NETANYAHU WANTS U.S. TO BE UNBENDING IN DEMANDS DURING NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN 66
ISRAEL TAKES NEW STEP TO ANNEX WEST BANK, AND NOBODY WILL STOP IT 68
GAZA DEATH TOLL 71

FEATURED TRENDS GUEST ARTICLES 75

LOCKED DOWN. ROUNDED UP. WAREHOUSED. THE RISE OF AMERICA'S CONCENTRATION CAMPS *by John & Nisha Whitehead* 75

THE HEART OF DARKNESS: *ISRAEL'S GOVERNMENT IS COMPLETELY EVIL by Philip Giraldi* 79

THE COMING CONSTITUTIONAL ICE AGE *by Judge Andrew P. Napolitano* 83

'FOREVER CHEMICALS' LINKED TO THREEFOLD HIGHER LIVER DISEASE RISK IN ADOLESCENTS *by Dr. Joseph Mercola* **87**

TRENDS IN GEOPOLITICS 95

NEW START NUCLEAR TREATY BETWEEN U.S. AND RUSSIA EXPIRES **95**
RUTTE SAYS NATO TROOPS WILL BE 'INSTANTLY' DEPLOYED TO UKRAINE ONCE THERE'S A PEACE DEAL 98
CHINA HAWK WINS SNAP ELECTION IN JAPAN TO THE DELIGHT OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION 101

PRESIDENTIAL REALITY SHOW® 103

CAMERA SHY: ICE CRACKDOWN INCLUDES VIOLATION OF FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO FILM FEDERAL OFFICERS IN PUBLIC, CRITICS SAY **103**
NEW POLL: AMERICANS GROWING MORE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR ECONOMIC FUTURE 105
TRUMP MAKING BRAIN-DEAD BIDEN LOOK GOOD? 107
BESSENT TAKES CREDIT FOR BREAKING IRAN 109
PENTAGON DIGS IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST JOURNALIST ACCESS 111
CONGRESS LAUNCHES PROBE INTO TRUMP FAMILY'S WORLD LIBERTY FINANCIAL 113
TRUMP NOW WANTS HARVARD TO PAY $1 BILLION OVER HANDLING OF 'ANTISEMITISM' PROTESTS 115
BILLIONAIRE GRIFFIN CALLS OUT TRUMP'S GRIFT 117
AMAZON SEES TAX BILL FALL AFTER TRUMP'S CUTS 119
WHILE DADDIES PLAY GOVERNMENT, SONS PLAY CRYPTO BUSINESS TYCOONS 121
TRUMP'S POLITICAL GANG RAISES $429M BEFORE MIDTERMS 123

TRENDS-EYE VIEW 125

YOUNG PEOPLE SEE 60 PERCENT JUMP IN PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS IN LAST 30 YEARS, STUDY SAYS **125**
DEATH OF JOURNALISM: BILLIONAIRE BEZOS GUTS WASHINGTON POST'S NEWSROOM 127

TRENDS IN HI-TECH SCIENCE 129

ANTIBIOTIC PROMPTS GUT BACTERIA TO MAKE ANTI-AGING COMPOUND **129**
"FIBER CHIP" COMPUTER IS AS THIN AS A THREAD 130
CHINESE ROBOTICS FIRM DISPLAYS "BIOMIMETIC" HUMANOID ROBOT 132

TRENDS IN AI 134

WILL AI SCORE A 10 AS AN OLYMPICS JUDGE? **134**
LIFE IMITATES TECH: BRAIN PROCESSES MATCH THOSE OF AI, STUDY SAYS 136
MATH ANXIETY? THERE'S AN AI FOR THAT 137
ALPHABET, NOT OPENAI, "HAS THE HOT HAND" IN AI NOW 140

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Photo by Amy Byrn

Welcome to **TRUMP: "I REALLY HAVE A BIG EGO"**

Last week, President Donald Trump attended the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington and recalled the 2020 Presidential Election and how important it was for him to win – if for nothing more than his own ego.

He repeated his claim that Joe Biden won the election because it was rigged, and said he had to win in 2024; he "needed it" for his ego.

"Beating these lunatics was incredible," he said. "What a great feeling."

This is not the first time Trump has spoken openly about ego. In 2013, he posted on Facebook: "Show me someone without an ego, and I'll show you a loser – having a healthy ego, or high opinion of yourself, is a real positive in life!"

Close Combat

As a black belt instructor of close combat fighting for many years, I always told my students what my teacher, Master John Perkins, a student of Brad Steiner – the top close combat instructor in America who used to write articles for the *Trends Journal*, (may they both rest in peace) – said to me: "The only time your ego gets into play is when your life is on the line".

Donald Trump's "Big Ego" is, by his words and deeds, a dangerous mental disorder.

And as Albert Einstein warned, "The only thing more dangerous than ignorance, is arrogance."

On the Geopolitical and Economic Fronts

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to visit Washington for talks with President Trump, where he is expected to push for hardline U.S. positions on Iran, terms Tehran has already signaled it will reject.

This week's issue explains the recent price fluctuations in the precious metals, and what to expect with the equity markets.

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Sincerely,

Gerald Celente and the Trends Journal Team.

TRENDS ON THE ECONOMIC AND MARKET FRONT

ECONOMIC UPDATE - MARKET OVERVIEW

As we have long forecast, the 20th Century was the century of the United States but the 21st Century will be the Chinese century. Why?

Because the business of America is War while the business of China is business. While this is old news for ***Trends Journal*** subscribers, it is now making the U.S. headlines.

Indeed, this is the front page article in today's Wall Street Journal:

Wall Street's Hunt for Cheaper Stocks Goes Global

High valuations and a weakening dollar are boosting bets that America's lead over other global markets will shrink

Last spring, it was "Sell America." Now Wall Street's hot trade is buy everywhere else. After years making outsize bets on the largest U.S. companies, investors are moving more money into international markets, wagering that America's wide lead on the rest of the world will shrink. For years, money managers say, the U.S. stock market was viewed as the only game in town. Now that perception is starting to shift.

Their optimism has been boosted by a number of developments abroad, from fiscal stimulus in Japan to a boom in European military spending. Some traders are simply hunting for better deals than the richly priced shares offered at home. Others are hoping to diversify out of major domestic indexes dominated by just a handful of names in the tech industry.

"Right now, we're in a global bull market," said Keith Lerner, chief investment officer at Truist Advisory Services. "It's no longer just a U.S. story."

That's correct, "It's no longer just a U.S. story."

Once-upon-a-time, there was a Five-Star General, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces during World War II and a two-term U.S. President, Dwight D. Eisenhower who warned the American people that "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone.

It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children."

Making a bad situation worse, President Trump said he wants to increase the 2027 U.S. defense budget to $1.5 trillion. That increase, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, would increase defense spending by $5 trillion through 2035, adding $5.8 trillion to the national debt when interest is included.

As for the sweat of the labors, as the rich in America get richer and the middle class keeps shrinking. Indeed, it was not a happy holiday spending spree for the plantation workers of Slavelandia.

While retail sales increased 0.6 percent in November, Santa Claus didn't come to town in December... they were flat and on an annual basis, with the inflation rate in the U.S. at 2.7 percent and annual business sales just 2.4 percent, real retail sales are in a shrinking mode.

And, with nearly 70 percent of the U.S. GDP being driven by consumer spending, it illustrates more economic danger ahead. Indeed, when you review the job numbers as reported in this week's and previous ***Trends Journals***, the numbers don't lie... the politicians running the country do.

And as we have detailed, the top 10 percent of Americans account for nearly 50 percent of the money spent while the middle class struggles. In fact, a bad situation for the average American keeps getting worse. Today, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that employee compensation costs rose at the slowest quarterly rate since Q3 of 2020... the depth of the COVID War when the nation was locked down.

"This is a K-shaped economy with strong spending from the top and much more cautious spending from middle- and lower-income consumers," Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union told CNBC. "Retail sales were flat in December, driven by soft spending on autos, home furnishings, appliances and clothing. These items were hard hit by tariffs in 2025 and consumers shifted their spending elsewhere."

By the numbers, a bad situation keeps getting worse. Today, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York reported that U.S. credit card balances hit a new high in the fourth quarter of last year, rising by $44 billion to $1.28 trillion... and a 5.5 percent jump in household debt from a year earlier.

Trouble Ahead

As we have forecast, get ready for Dot-com Bust 2.0, which will make a bad economic future much worse. In the trend forecasting business it is important to know that trends are born, they grow, mature, reach old age and die. The AI trend was publically born just four years ago. Therefore, as we see the future, you don't invest heavily in the newly born infant. But as evidenced by the Magnificent Seven and other hi-tech AI investments and PE ratios, The Street has not only overinvested in these sectors, we have forecast that China and other Asian nations will take the lead in AI.
And making a bad situation worse, major investors in software companies over the past two decades, are now taking a hit from software's feared obsolescence.

Last week's stock market plunge was triggered in part by fears that AI will erase the need for many software programs that are now standard in business.
The sector's volatility is leading some asset managers to delay cashing out of investments that have fallen in value.
Blue Owl and KKR both warned in recent earnings calls that their financial performances this year might be impaired.
KKR likely will postpone selling some assets this year, possibly crimping cash flow, CFO Robert Lewin said on the call.
On their call, Blue Owl executives noted that investors are pulling money out of its private credit funds and causing the company to fall short of its 2029 growth targets of $500 billion under management and more than $3.1 billion in fees.
Instead, growth in fee earnings this year will be "modest" compared to a 20-percent jump last year, Blue Owl CFO Alan Kirschenbaum told analysts.

TREND FORECAST: *Currently, with the leading AI-tech companies spending over $600 billion to make advanced chips and hi-energy power centers, their massive capital spending has way outpaced their cash flows. And now that reality is finally hitting The Street.*

And, considering the rising debt levels of nations across the globe, increasing geopolitical volatility and the coming Dot-com Bust 2.0, we remain gold and silver bullish.

LAST WEEK: A STUMBLE, THEN A BOUNCE TO A NEW RECORD

Stock prices sank on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday last week as investors showed new concerns about whether massive investments in artificial intelligence (AI) will ever return a profit. Some expressed worries that the software industry would lose value, or even become obsolete, as AI begins to replace its products.

Other markets were broadly risk-averse as well. Bitcoin plunged below $61,000; gold and silver prices also dropped.

Investors recovered their optimism on Friday. Many saw the week's sell-off as overdone, based on fear and not fundamentals, and jumped back in. Jensen Huang, Nvidia's chief, said demand for his company's AI chips remains "incredibly high," giving investors a jolt of confidence in the sector. Nvidia's share price popped up 7.8 percent on the day.

More than half of S&P-listed companies have announced their quarterly results and about four in five have surpassed analysts' forecasts, far above the historical average of 67 percent, Reuters pointed out.

Also, consumer sentiment has risen to a six-month high, according to the University of Michigan's latest monthly household survey.

Friday's rally propelled the Dow Jones Industrial Average up 1,200 points to close above 50,000 for the first time. The Standard & Poor's 500 index added 1.97 percent, and the NASDAQ rebounded 2.18 percent. The Russell 2000 index of small- and mid-cap companies bounced back 3 percent on Friday.

The Dow ended the week with a 2.5-percent gain. The NASDAQ was less fortunate, closing the five-day trading span down 1.8 percent. The S&P ticked down 0.1 percent.

Broadcom, Oracle, and Palantir were part of the tech sector's Friday recovery as investors saw bargains. Broadcom went up 7.1 percent, Oracle and Palantir 4 percent each. Software stocks, which helped trigger the week's selloff, remained soft.

The AI sector "has been volatile, and there have been selloffs at times, but I think there's enough evidence that there's real demand for AI products, real promise with what they can do, and a necessity of a lot of spending to get there," strategist Ross Mayfield at Baird Private Wealth Management said to Reuters.

"When there's this kind of a selloff, I think there's a floor where there's going to be a certain set of investors that steps in and starts buying these names," he added.

"You have the investment that Google is making, Nvidia is making, that Meta is making, that Amazon is making," Gabriel Shahin, founder of Falcon Wealth Planning, told CNBC. "There is money that will be deployed. It's just the carousel [of money movement] sometimes scares people."

Shahin is among analysts seeing what he calls a "great recalibration," in which investors sideline growth stocks after a three-and-a-half-year run and switch to value

stocks. That theme exemplified a portion of Friday's rally, with money moving into financial and industrial shares.

Bitcoin also tanked last week as money fled risk. It fell below $61,000, erasing more than a year's worth of gains, but clawed its way back above $70,000 Friday. It lost 16 percent over the week. (See "Bitcoin Tanks" in this issue.)

The yield on the bellwether 10-year U.S. treasury note ticked down from 4.210 percent Thursday to 4.206 Friday. Yields fall as securities' values rise with demand.

For the week, U.S. spot gold regained 5.8 percent, pricing at $4,778 at 5 p.m. U.S. EST on 6 February. It briefly broke upward through $5,000 on 4 February amid last week's market tumult.

Brent crude oil for March delivery rose 2.7 percent last week to $68 at 5 p.m. U.S. EST on 6 February. West Texas Intermediate, which benchmarks U.S. domestic oil prices, moved up 2.3 percent to $63.55.

Bitcoin's price last week fell by more than half from its record of $126,210 on 5 October last year. After teasing $60,000, it climbed back to $70,005 at 5 p.m. U.S. EST on 6 February.

Outside the U.S., markets were mixed.

London's FTSE 100 was up 1.43 percent. The pan-European Stoxx 600 added 1.56 percent.

In Japan, the Nikkei 225 grew by 1.27 percent. The KOSPI in South Korea lost 0.65 percent.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng was off by 1.98 percent. Mainland China's CSI 300 retreated 0.66 percent and the SSE Composite was down 0.35 percent.

YESTERDAY: STOCKS RISE AS INVESTORS KEEP BETTING ON AI

The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 20.20, or 0.04 percent, to 50,135.87 and the S&P500 gained 32.52, or 0.47 percent, to 6,964.82. The tech-heavy Nasdaq gained 207.457, or 0.90 percent, to 23,238.67.

The market gains were fueled by tech stocks like Broadcom, Nvidia, and Oracle, which saw its stock increase by 9.6 percent based on D.A. Davidson upgrading the stock from neutral to buy, according to CNBC.

Elsewhere, London's FTSE gained 16.48, or 0.16 percent, to 10,386.23 and the benchmark STOXX600 increased 4.29, or 0.70 percent, to 621.41. In Asia, Japan's Nikkei gained 2,110.26, or 3.89 percent, to 56,363.94 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng increased by 467.21, 1.76 percent, to 27,027.16. In China, the Shanghai Composite increased by 57.506, or 1.,41 percent, to 4,123.09 and the Shenzhen Component increased by 301.70, or 2.17 percent, to 14,207.44.

OIL: London-traded Brent increased by 99 cents, or 1.145 percent, to close at $69.04 a barrel and U.S. West Texas Intermediate gained 81 cents, or 1.27 percent, to $64.36.

Reuters reported that oil traders expressed concerns over the U.S. Department of Transportation's advisory that U.S.-flagged ships near the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman should try to stay as far as possible from Iran.

Bjarne Schieldrop, an analysis at SEB, told the wire service that the Iranian "risk premium cannot be fully defused as long as U.S. warships are located where they are."

TRENDPOST: *The Trump administration has been threatening war with Iran over its nuclear program, ballistic missile capabilities, and its support for proxies in the Middle East. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is headed to Washington later this week for the seventh time since Trump was elected and the two are expected to discuss developments.*

Trump has told reporters that negotiations were off to a good start, but Netanyahu is expected to visit the White House to try and sell his maximalist demands to force Iran to end its nuke program, cap its ballistic missile program, and stop its support of proxies in the region, which Tehran said is a non-starter.

As we have detailed, should the U.S. and or Israel go to war with Iran Brent crude prices will spike to above $100 a barrel and that will bring down much of the global economy and equity markets.

GOLD: The precious metal saw gains as of 3 p.m. ET yesterday and was up $108.80, or 2.19 percent, to $5,074.91 an ounce. Gold is up $537.40, or 11.84 percent, in the last 30 days and 76.36 percent in the past year.

The USD fell 0.8 percent, which made the precious metal more appealing to foreign buyers. Economists are also waiting for key economic data due out later this week that could give insight into the Fed's next move on interest rates. Reuters noted that the market is betting that there will be at least two rate cuts this year.

Gold also benefited from investors seeking a safe haven amid global turmoil and the growing risk of a wider war in Ukraine and a war between the U.S. and Iran.

TREND FORECAST: *Gerald Celente has long noted that there is no such thing as an investment that goes straight up, but while gold has seen some recent pullback, we maintain our forecast that prices will keep rising. And we do not anticipate any resolutions to Iran and Ukraine.*

And beyond the geopolitical uncertainty is the coming equity market Dot-com Bust 2.0.that we have forecast will hit the equity markets this year. We also showed clearly on last week's cover that Trump is fine with watching the weakening of the USD. Therefore, the lower the dollar falls the higher gold prices rise. Gold is dollar based, so as the dollar declines it is cheaper for other nations whose currencies have gone up to buy the precious metal.

On the geopolitical side of life, John Mearsheimer, the University of Chicago professor, said in an interview Friday that the Trump administration's so-called effort to hold negotiations to end the Ukraine War and prevent an ill-advised war between the U.S. and Iran is an exercise in futility because, as of now, there are no plausible deals in either crisis that all parties would agree to.

BITCOIN: The world's most popular crypto was hovering in the $70,000 range, and was down $128.15, or 0.18 percent, to $70,177.97 as of 12:48 p.m. ET.

Pick a side.

Some analysts say the down trend is just temporary and others warn that this is the beginning of the end. (*The Financial Times* published an article in this weekend's issue titled, "Bitcoin is Still About $70,000 Too High")

The article noted that BTC saw its biggest fall since 2022, and neared $60,000 last week, which represented a loss of more than half its October highs.

TRENDPOST: *Jemima Kelly, the author of the article, noted that Michael Saylor, the CEO of Strategy and perhaps BTC's biggest booster, assured those on an earnings call that this is just a minor bump along the way. He noted what we have been saying for over a year: Trump will do all he can to help the crypto market. (See "BITCOIN OR BIT-CON? THE TRUMPSTERS ARE RUNNING THE SHOW" 6 Jan 2026.)*

"I don't think you can underestimate the importance of having support for the industry and digital capital at the very top of the political structure," he said, according to the report.

Kelly wrote that it becomes "very awkward" for BTC enthusiasts because the coin is struggling, even with who Saylor called a "bitcoin president."

TODAY: **STOCKS MIXED, RETAIL SALES STALL**

The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 52.27, or 0.10 percent, to 50,188.14 and the S&P500 lost 23.01, or 0.33 percent, to 6,941.81. The tech-heavy Nasdaq shed 136.196, or 0.59 percent, to 23,102.474.

Investors are becoming increasingly worried that December's dismal holiday sales, plus the lousy job numbers that are being reported is more proof that the Americans are going broke. The report also noted that separate reports released today found that wages in the U.S. increased at their weakest pace in over four years – 0.7 percent in the last quarter of 2025. The report also noted that the percent of car loans and credit card balances were at their highest in 15 years.

TRENDPOST: *We continue to note that there is a major detachment from Wall Street and Main Street, but it seems like the Presstitute media is finally catching up. Here were the three top stories on the Drudge Report.*
"GALLUP: AMERICAN OPTIMISM SLUMPS TO RECORD LOW..."
"Tariffs cost average household $1,000 last year..."
"Retail Sales Unexpectedly Flatline..."
As Gerald Celente has long said, "When all else fails they take you to war."
Axios noted that Trump says he may send a "second carrier to strike Iran if talks fail."

Elsewhere, London's FTSE shed 32.39, or 0.31 percent, to close at 10,353.84 and the benchmark STOXX600 lost 0.44, or 0.07 percent, to 620.97. In Asia, Japan's Nikkei gained 1,286.60, or 2.28 percent, to 57,650.54 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 155.99, or 0.58 percent, to 27,183.15. In China, the Shanghai Composite gained 5.283, or 0.13 percent, to 4,128.373 and the Shenzhen Component gained 2.19, or 0.015 percent, to 14,210.63.

OIL: London-traded Brent lost 24 cents, or 0.35 percent, to close at $68.80 and U.S. West Texas Intermediate lost 40 cents, or 0.62 percent, to $63.96.
The oil market was watching developments in negotiations between the U.S. and Iran amid risks of a regional war. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be visiting Trump in the White House for the seventh time and is expected to push him to embrace Tel Aviv's maximalist demands, which include no nuclear program, caps on its ballistic missile program, and the end of all support for allies in the region.
Mohammad Marandi, the professor from the University of Tehran, said these issues are not up for discussion.
Larry Johnson, the former CIA analyst, told Glenn Diesen that he has heard from sources in the U.S. government that the decision has already been made by the U.S. to attack.

TREND FORECAST: *A war with Iran will destroy the global economy and send oil prices spiking above $100 a barrel, making a bad situation worse.*

GOLD: The precious metal shed $33 today and gold closed at $5,024 an ounce. Tomorrow the U.S. government will release January's nonfarm payroll data, which could shed light on the next move from the Fed on interest rates.

TREND FORECAST: The Trends Journal *sees gold and silver prices rising because of increasing global and economic instability.*

BITCOIN: The world's most popular crypto continued to limp along, and was down $1,254.79, or 1.79 percent, to $68,907.68 as of 3:50 p.m. in New York. The crypto is down 23.74 percent in the last month.
Michael Saylor, the CEO of Strategy, told CNBC that he has no plans to sell any of his company's holdings, which is now 714,644 coins. The report noted that the average price he paid for BTC was $76,056.
"If bitcoin falls 90 percent for the next four years, we'll refinance the debt," he told the network. "If you think it's going to zero, then we'll deal with that, but I don't think it's going to zero, and I don't think it's going to $8,000, either."

TRENDPOST: *Bitcoin investors said they believe the market has shown signs that it bottomed out after last week's selloff, with the risk of going even lower in the interim, but regaining momentum for future increases.*
Axios noted how Trump billed himself as the country's first bitcoin president, and how he was embraced by many in the industry. But the report said that love affair may have ran its course. The report said, "Industry-friendly crypto legislation has stalled, in part

because the White House rejected Democrats' demands to limit the Trump family's crypto profiteering."
The report was likely referring to the Digital Asset Market Clarity Act, which would be an overreaching bill that would lay out the regulatory framework.
Carl Runefelt, a bitcoin influencer on social media, posted: "Trump was a reason for me to believe in [bitcoin going to] $300k. At the end he was bad for crypto. Big mistake to have him as president," according to the report.

BITCOIN RATTLED AMID TECH-STOCK SELLOFF

Bitcoin, the world's most popular cryptocurrency, came out limping after last week's tech selloff, falling below $67,000, as industry insiders acknowledge that "sentiment has deteriorated sharply."

"The crypto market still feels tired as we see little appetite from anyone to step in convincingly at these levels," Jasper De Maere, a strategist from Wintermute, told the *Financial Times.*

The paper noted that BTC had been riding high on momentum from the election of President Donald Trump, who promised to fully embrace cryptos. He was so committed to its success, that his family became major investors in all things crypto and benefited financially from crypto-friendly policies from the administration. *(See "ERIC TRUMP: CRYPTOS MAY BE ABLE TO SAVE THE U.S. DOLLAR" 23 Sep 2025, and "BITCOIN OR BIT-CON? THE TRUMPSTERS ARE RUNNING THE SHOW" 6 Jan 2026.)*

The *FT*'s report noted that Trump promised to try and turn the U.S. into the "crypto capital of the world," which helped drive the price up to over $125,000 last summer.

The paper noted that analysts look to Michael Saylor's Strategy to get a sense of the BTC market, and said the company reported a $12.6 billion net loss last quarter, tied mainly to the coin's price decline.

CoinDesk reported on Friday that Strategy holds 713,502 coins, worth $50 billion. The FT's report noted that Saylor's company is down 25 percent on the year. (As of writing this article, BTC was back above $70,600.)

***TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal** has been consistent in its belief that Trump will do everything in his power to make sure bitcoin is successful to make sure his crypto gang is happy and his family sees profits. (See "TRUMP'S FAMILY SEES NEW CRYPTO WINDFALL AFTER BITCOIN-MINING COMPANY'S LISTING" 9 Sep 2025, "TRUMP FAMILY'S CRYPTO VENTURES ARE PERFORMING BETTER THAN ANY OTHER TRUMP BUSINESS" 19 Aug 2025, "TRUMP'S SONS TALK AT BITCOIN CONFERENCE, TAKE AIM AT TRADITIONAL BANKS" 3 Jun 2025, "ETHICAL CONCERNS MOUNT OVER TRUMP'S CRYPTO VENTURE" 11 Mar 2025 and "TRUMP NAMES CRYPTOCURRENCIES FOR STRATEGIC RESERVE, SPARKING RALLY" 4 Mar 2025.)*

Saylor agrees and says he believes Trump's administration will carry the day with its pro-crypto agenda. Saylor said BTC's volatility is a "transfer of wealth" to long-term institutional entities, according to Barchart.

Some other crypto players have resorted to layoffs.

The FT's report said Gemini, the crypto exchange that was co-founded by the Winklevoss twins, announced that it would cut 200 jobs and end some of its operations to save money. The report noted that its stock has fallen 80 percent since September, when it first went public.

The company said it will shut down its crypto exchange operations in the U.K., EU, and Australia.

"The reality is that America has the world's greatest capital markets and America has always been where it's at for Gemini. So it's time for Gemini to focus and double down on America," the brothers said.
Matthew Sigel, head of digital asset research at VanEck, told Benzinga that there has not been a single factor in why BTC has fallen, and said there have been a plethora of reasons, from quantum computer risks to concerns that the AI hype is "unraveling."

"The list reveals a market under siege from multiple directions," he posted

U.S. CONSUMERS' OUTLOOK SHINES A BIT BRIGHTER

Despite lingering concerns regarding inflation, tariffs, and the job market, U.S. consumer sentiment in the aggregate rose in February to its highest since last August.

It was the third consecutive month of improvement in the University of Michigan's survey of consumers' views of the present and future economy.

The survey's index rose to 57.3 this month from 56.4 in January. Economists in a Reuters survey had expected the index would edge down to 55.

The mild increase still has the index about 20 lower than it was in January 2025 when Donald Trump returned to the Oval Office.

"Sentiment surged for consumers with the largest stock portfolios, while it stagnated and remained at dismal levels for consumers without stock holdings," said Joanne Hsu, the survey's director. "Concerns about the erosion of personal finances from high prices and elevated risk of job loss continue to be widespread."

The poll's finding is "confirming a so-called K-shaped economy, where higher-income households are doing well but lower-income consumers are struggling," Reuters said.

"We may have seen the trough in consumer sentiment as positive fundamentals should support attitudes in 2026, as long as the recent stock market selloff doesn't continue," Oren Klachkin, who analyzes financial markets for Nationwide, told Reuters. "That said, we aren't optimistic for a sharp rebound in consumer sentiment."

The survey preceded last week's stock market selloff and rebound.

TREND FORECAST: *The latest consumer confidence uptick is minimal. As we detail in this and previous Trends Journals, the job market is in deep slump mode, and its future is very bleak.*

As we have long noted, there is no connection between Wall Street and Main Street. As long as the stock market's bubble continues to inflate, the U.S. will live in two economies.

In one, the well-off do well with stock portfolios, well-paid jobs, and a comfortable home equity cushion. In the other, households will scrimp, struggle to pay bills much less grow their savings, and fret about the security of their jobs.

When the overinflated equity market bubble pops, as we forecast in our Top Trend 2026, Dot-Com Bust 2.0, the reality of declining consumer sentiment will become undeniable and the nation, as with others, will sink into the Greatest Depression. Again, look at the reality of the job market, suffering its worst decline in decades.

JANUARY'S LAYOFFS THE MOST IN 17 YEARS

The 108,435 workers to be laid off in January was the most in any January since 2009 at the depth of the Great Recession, outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas reported.

Employers plan new hires totaling just 5,306, the least in any January since 2009 when Challenger began tracking the number. The figure was down 13 percent year on year and a whopping 49 percent from December.

"Generally, we see a high number of job cuts in the first quarter, but this is a high total for January," senior vice president Andy Challenger said in announcing the figures. "It means most of these plans were set at the end of 2025, signaling that employers are less than optimistic about the outlook for 2026."

Amazon, Dow Inc., and UPS each have announced major layoffs, prompting many analysts to fear for the health of the overall economy. UPS alone has announced it will dump more than 30,000 workers; Amazon will shed 16,000 mostly office jobs.

More than 100 companies have notified the U.S. labor department of "significant" workforce reductions in coming months, according to CNBC.

TREND FORECAST: *More layoffs and few new hires foretells an economy in which fewer households have incomes to spend, which portends a slowing economy that will include even more layoffs.*

Making a bad situation worse, tariffs are keeping prices elevated without returning proportionately more money to manufacturers and service companies.
With prices still rising and foreign trade hobbled, the U.S. economy is on a downward spiral. The stock market may boom, but Wall Street's reality continues to diverge further and further from Main Street's.

HIRING REMAINED WEAK IN JANUARY, ADP FIGURES CONFIRM

The U.S. economy added an anemic 22,000 private sector jobs last month, net after quits and layoffs, according to payroll service ADP's monthly report. ADP does not track government hiring.

The January tally was less than half of the number forecast by economists *The Wall Street Journal* surveyed and below the feeble 37,000 ADP counted in December.

Education and healthcare again led hiring with a combined 74,000 new workers. Also as in previous months, manufacturing and professional and business services cut their payrolls.

Economists are estimating that January's jobs report from the U.S. labor department, due 11 February, will show about 70,000 net new nonfarm jobs, up from 50,000 in December, Reuters reported, with the unemployment rate steady at 4.4 percent.

If the jobless rate remains unchanged, the U.S. Federal Reserve is more likely to leave interest rates untouched at its next meeting, Reuters noted.

In a separate U.S. labor department report, the number of job postings in December was the lowest in five years, led by a drop in demand for business and professional services employees. That may be a sign that businesses are continuing to replace humans with artificial intelligence in a quest for greater productivity.

JOBLESS CLAIMS RISE MORE THAN EXPECTED

In week ending 31 January, new claims for U.S. unemployment benefits grew by 22,000 to 231,000**,** the U.S. labor department reported.

Economists surveyed by Reuters expected the total to be 212,000. Heavy snowstorms across much of the country could have left some people temporarily without work, Reuters noted.

The number of unemployed continuing to receive payments after an initial week rose by 25,000 to 1.844 million during the week that ended on 24 January.

Despite recent announcements of massive layoffs by Amazon, Dow Inc., and UPS, the jobs market remains in a stable “low hire, low fire” state, analysts said to Reuters. (See “January’s Layoffs the Most in 17 Years” in this issue.)

Employers hesitate to change their situation while they wait to see how artificial intelligence and the fallout from tariffs will impact their businesses, Reuters said.

TREND FORECAST: *Layoffs are on the rise, hiring in well-paid professions has cratered, and claims for jobless benefits are increasing.*

If the U.S. jobs market is showing “evidence of stabilization,” as U.S. Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell said last week, it is stabilizing in a very bad place.

Under its charter, the Fed has two mandates: to keep inflation low and maximize job growth. By keeping interest rates unchanged at its last meeting, the central bank “prematurely shifted its focus from the labor market back to inflation,” Samuel Tombs, Pantheon Macroeconomics’ chief U.S. analyst, said in a message to clients.

Lower rates would make it cheaper for businesses to borrow, expand, and create new jobs.

Instead, the labor market is “perilously close to a definitive breaking point,” economist Corey Stahle at jobs website Indeed wrote in a note.

U.S. MANUFACTURING IS IN A "JOBS RECESSION"

Joe Biden tried to boost the number of U.S. manufacturing jobs by subsidizing the chips industry's expansion and funding infrastructure repair. Donald Trump tried it with tariffs to freeze out exports and spark domestic factory production.

Neither has worked.

More than 200,000 factory jobs have vanished from the American economy in the past three years, *The Wall Street Journal* reported. The industry has lost workers in each month since Trump announced his "Liberation Day" tariff assault on world trade.

The Institute for Supply Management's index of overall factory activity has been negative for 26 consecutive months through December, although January's increase in new orders and factory output may signal a possible reversal.

In November, the U.S. Federal Reserve cut its estimate of overall industrial production since the COVID War. "We never got all the way back from that," economist Josh Lerner at SGH Macro Advisors, told the *WSJ*.

Some analysts have said U.S. manufacturing is in a "jobs recession."

Trump administration officials cut or froze a significant portion of the grants and subsidies Biden and a Democratic Congress had allotted to the manufacturing sector, calling them "overly generous" and saying taxpayers were not getting enough benefit.

In the long term, Trump's tariffs could revive American industry by making foreign goods more expensive in the U.S. than domestically produced items. However, tariffs are paid by U.S. consumers, not foreign entities, which takes more money out of household budgets and reduces discretionary spending.

In the short term, the tariffs hike costs of factories' supplies and raw materials, forcing them to raise their prices – possibly reducing their revenues – or run short on needed inputs, which also cuts into revenues by giving manufacturers less product to sell.

At the same time, China continues to flood the world with exports, keeping prices low and squeezing margins for American factories trying to find a profitable place in world markets.

“There’s very little in our product portfolio that has benefited from tariffs,” H.O. Woltz, CEO of Insteel Industries in South Carolina told the *WSJ*. At times, the company has run short of raw steel made in the U.S. and has had to resort to tariff-burdened imports, he said.

At metals company NN in North Carolina, CEO Harold Bevis thinks tariffs ultimately will boost his business by making imports more expensive and sparking more domestic production. Meanwhile, however, the company’s costs are rising, including for the gold and silver it needs for some products.

NN is sourcing some materials from Mexico that are tariff-free under a recent trade deal. That takes potential sales, and revenue, from U.S. firms that could be NN suppliers if products were available and their costs were competitive.

“The biggest factor overall in how manufacturing is doing is how our economy is doing,” Scott Paul, president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing, said in a *WSJ* interview. His group supports tariffs on select products from certain countries.

“It’s way too early to tell what [the impact of tariffs] is because we’ve just exited the roller coaster ride,” he added.

The loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs began in the 1970s when steel and other industries started losing jobs to China and other countries offering cheap labor and a lighter regulatory hand.

TREND FORECAST: *A resurgence of American manufacturing will mean growth in factories’ labor force, but that is years away since President Trump’s tariff war to date has not brought an escalating manufacturing base back to America.*

As a result of Bill Clinton’s NAFTA and bringing China into the World Trade Organization, U.S. manufacturers shipped out their production to those nations so they could make more money by hiring cheap labor.

Now, with artificial intelligence and robotics making their way throughout the manufacturing world, there will be fewer jobs available in those sectors for unskilled workers, but more jobs for graduates with technical and mathematical skills.

For a wave of well-paid new jobs, the U.S. will have to look somewhere other than the manufacturing industry.

OLDER AMERICANS ARE "UN-RETIRING" TO PAY THE BILLS

Older Americans are experiencing higher expenses, their savings are dwindling, and Social Security payments cover less of their expenses.

As a result, many older Americans are leaving retirement and re-entering the workforce.

In summer 2025, 6 percent of U.S. retirees went back to work, according to a survey by AARP, the seniors service group. Since then, another 7 percent have "unretired," the same survey recently found.

Forty-eight percent of survey respondents who are back working said they have done so out of financial necessity; 15 percent were simply bored and 14 percent wanted a way to remain active.

More than two-thirds of those surveyed believe it is difficult now to find work, especially for elders. It also may be difficult to keep them: 24 percent fear losing their newfound jobs sometime in the next 12 months.

Even retirees with stock portfolios are uncomfortable, economist Geoffrey Sanzenbacher at Boston College said to CNBC.

"People are really sensitive to inflation," he noted. "Even if their incomes go up, they feel pinched if the things they buy are a lot more expensive."

TREND FORECAST: *"Un-retirees" are most likely to take low-skill, low-paid jobs such as grocery cashiers, delivery drivers, receptionists, or counter help at fast-food joints.*

That puts them in competition with younger workers who lack the skills for better positions.

The glut of workers at the low end of the economy's pay scale will continue to hobble the financial resources of teens and young adults as well as the success of America's underclass, exacerbating the poverty that leads to crime, poor health, and inflated welfare costs.

FOUR AI GIANTS ANNOUNCE $660 BILLION IN 2026 CAPITAL COSTS

Amazon, Google, Meta, and Microsoft collectively plan to spend $660 billion this year to build out artificial intelligence infrastructure, according to their public statements.

The figure is a 40-percent increase above the $410 they spent in 2025 and 165 percent more than the $245 billion they laid out in 2024.

Amazon, Google, and Microsoft together lost $900 billion in market value during last week's tech rout in the equity markets as investors once again showed doubts about how soon, or even whether, these colossal outlays will show a return on investment. (Markets rebounded significantly at the end of last week.)

Shock over the spending plans overwhelmed news of the 14-percent jump in revenue to $1.6 trillion the three reported.

Amazon's shares sank 6 percent on 5 February after announcing $200 billion in capital costs this year, $50 billion more than analysts had expected and more than either Google or Microsoft will spend. CEO Andy Jassey said the outlay is essential to position the company to take advantage of profit potential in AI, chips, robotics, and satellites.

Jassey cited the 24-percent increase in Amazon Web Services' revenues last year as proof the eye-popping expenditure will be worth it.

Microsoft's market capitalization dove 17 percent from 5 February after it revealed a plan to boost AI costs by 66 percent over last year's.

It also admitted that 45 percent of its $625 billion in future cloud service contracts were with OpenAI, a startup that has never turned a profit and had revenues of about $20 billion in 2025.

"AI bubble fears are settling back in," Jeffries analyst Brent Thill told the *Financial Times*. "Investors are in a mini-timeout around tech and nothing the companies say fundamentally matters."

TREND FORECAST: *Even if the trillions of dollars being poured into AI infrastructure does eventually pay off, it will take longer than the stock market is likely to wait.*

AI majors already are trading at levels that are not justified by anything but hopes and dreams. With fears already growing about an AI market bubble, their prices are unlikely to rise much more.

Investors already are turning away from growth stocks, and AI in particular, and storing their money in basics such as consumer staples, financial services, and utilities.

The fears of a bubble will continue to grow and eventually will deliver the Dot-Com Bust 2.0 that we forecast as a Top Trend of 2026

FED NOMINEE SEES AI AS PRODUCTIVITY BOON FOR U.S. ECONOMY

Kevin Warsh, Donald Trump's choice as the next chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve, shares Trump's conviction that the central bank's interest rates must be much lower – and he thinks artificial intelligence (AI) is the way to make that work.

AI is "the most productivity-enhancing wave of our lifetimes," Warsh has said, and thus will

enable the central bank to slash interest rates without rekindling inflation.

As evidence, Warsh cites former Fed chair Alan Greenspan's action in the 1990s. "Greenspan believed, based on anecdotes and rather esoteric data, that we weren't in a position where we needed to raise rates," Warsh said in a December interview. "As a result, we had a stronger economy [and] more stable prices."

Treasury secretary Scott Bessent shares the view.

"It's clear that we are at the nascent stages of a productivity boom, not unlike the 1990s," he said in a January interview on CNBC. He urged viewers to read noted journalist Bob Woodward's biography of Greenspan that showed "how he correctly let the economy run hot."

Back then, Greenspan convinced the Fed's rate-setting committee that the economy was growing faster than official data showed. The group chose not to raise rates to forestall inflation and the economy boomed.

Greenspan was "absolutely right," former treasury secretary Janet Yellen, who was president of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco at the time, told the *Financial Times*.

Warsh's view of AI's productivity potential is shared by none other than the man he will ostensibly replace.

"If you look back [at] wave after wave [of technological change], there will be some disruption but ultimately technology increases productivity, which is the basis for rising wages," Jerome Powell acknowledged in a January statement.

"Growing evidence shows that AI has the power to significantly boost productivity," Lisa Cook, the Fed governor Trump is in the midst of trying to fire, has said.

Anil Kashyap, a University of Chicago economist, said in an *FT* interview that Warsh believes that because of AI, companies making the best use of it will be "doing things that are unimaginable" a year from now.

Hedge fund billionaire Stanley Druckenmiller agrees with Warsh, who once ran largely tech-focused investments for Druckenmiller's family office.

“He’s got a great network [in Silicon Valley],” Druckenmiller told the *FT*. “Because he doesn’t just know the top down but also the weeds of the speed of AI and the terms of disruption, he just has a better understanding than a normal macroeconomist.”

Other economists are less sanguine, arguing it will take longer than a year to determine if AI brings the economic transformation Warsh envisions or if the technology turns out to be what the *FT* calls a “damp squib” that disappoints.

“Neither economic theory nor the data” supports the breathless optimism now enveloping the technology,” Nobel economist Daron Acemoglu has written.

“I just don’t see the evidence being in place yet,” analyst James Knightley at ING bank commented to the *FT*.

Warsh will have the chance to test his theory in mid-May if the U.S. Senate confirms him as Powell’s replacement. Donald Trump wants the Fed’s base rate to be 1 percent, not the current 3.75 percent, by November’s mid-term Congressional elections.

In contrast, central bank officials have forecast only one additional rate cut this year. The usual reduction is a quarter point at a time, rarely more.

Greenspan convinced his colleagues by using data, those present at the time recall, not anecdotes or rosy outlooks.

“Greenspan’s hunch was backed up by digging in, digging underneath, and finding things other people hadn’t,” Don Kohn, a former Fed vice-chair who was in the room at the time as the committee’s secretary, reminded the *FT*.

“If Warsh wants to convince present-day rate-setters of an AI-induced productivity boom, he will need to do the same,” the *FT* noted.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have greatly detailed, when gold, silver prices dove on 30 January, the mainstream media said it was because Kevin Warsh would not push for lower interest rates. However, in last week’s* ***Trends Journal****, we noted numerous statements from Warsh which details that he is a low interest rate champion. And we also noted quotes from President Trump that Warsh is a low-interest rate fan.*

Therefore, as the U.S. economy weakens, when Warsh takes over as Fed-Head and chairs the meeting in May (should the U.S. Senate confirm him) he will push for lower

interest rates. And the lower interest rates fall the deeper the dollar will fall, and the deeper the dollar falls, the higher precious metal prices will rise.

WEAK U.S. HOUSING MARKET HANDS BUYERS THE ADVANTAGE

U.S. home sales are the slowest in decades. As a result, homeowners intent on selling are lowering their prices at a record pace. In December, homes that sold outnumbered new listings by at least 600,000, the largest such gap since 2013, according to online brokerage Redfin.

Last year, 62 percent of buyers were able to dicker a final price below the one at which the home was listed, the highest proportion since 2019, Redfin said. The average discount was around 8 percent, the largest since 2012, the brokerage noted.

In December, sales jumped 5.1 percent, year on year, the largest monthly increase in almost two years.

Buyers also are frequently winning additional concessions from sellers, such as cash paid toward closing costs, *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

Worries about job security, rising costs, as well as high home prices and mortgage interest rates, are keeping a significant number of potential buyers out of the market. Therefore, when buyers show interest, sellers are eager to accommodate them.

“Buyers and sellers are going to be more on the same page about what an appropriate price will be,” Redfin chief economist Daryl Fairweather told the *WSJ*.

Sellers are the most accommodating in the South, particularly Florida and Texas, where a post-COVID construction boom flooded the market with new houses. In Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and West Palm Beach, 85 percent of buyers paid less than the asking price last year, the *WSJ* found.

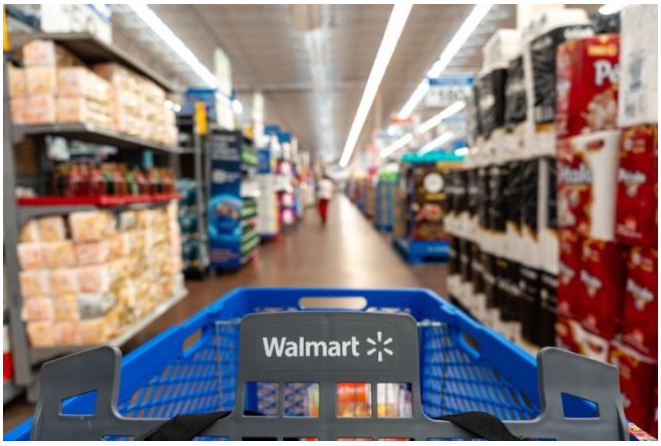
Only 32 percent of buyers snagged discounts in Newark, N.J., the lowest percentage in the nation. Newark was followed by San Francisco and San Jose, where the share of buyers winning reductions was 39 percent.

TREND FORECAST: *Home sales and discounted prices are more clustered at the top of the market, where houses sell for $750,000 or more in certain markets... but not across the nation.*

Demand for houses priced under $500,000 will remain strong because that is the range that a larger number of potential buyers can afford. That demand will enable most homeowners in that range to hold relatively close to their asking price, assuming the price is reasonable.

As the U.S. economy weakens, so too will housing prices, but not as dramatically as they did during the 2007-2009 Great Recession. However, prices will drop more sharply in areas across the nation where buyers fled to during the COVID War such as sections of Florida and Texas.

WALMART JOINS THE TRILLION-DOLLAR CLUB



Walmart's stock market value reached $1 trillion on 3 February, making it the 10th company and second retailer to enter a realm that has been the domain of tech firms. Amazon was the first retailer, with a current market cap of about $2.25 trillion.

The club's other members include Nvidia, the richest, with a market value above $4 trillion. Others include Alphabet, Apple, chip maker Broadcom, and Microsoft. Walmart and Berkshire Hathaway are the only trillion-dollar companies lacking a tech focus, the *Financial Times* noted.

Walmart's share price has more than doubled over the past two years as inflation, high interest rates, and fears over the economic future has sent shoppers in search of lower-priced goods. Its revenue will exceed $700 billion this year from its 11,000 stores worldwide, analysts have forecast.

Last year, the company formed partnerships with Google and Open AI, whose chatbots can steer browsers toward Walmart as a source of products people show an interest in.

Walmart has achieved its milestone despite a year in which it absorbed about two-thirds of the cost that Donald Trump's tariffs added to its imported goods.

The company began in 1962 when Sam Walton opened a store in Rogers, Ark. Walton's descendants still own 44 percent of the company's stock, giving their holdings a value of more than $440 billion.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have greatly detailed, America is no longer the Land of Opportunity. Gone are the days of neighborhood Mom and Pop businesses when there were shoe stores, clothing stores, fish stores, butcher shops, stationery stores, grocery stores, hardware stores, drug stores, etc. Now the "chains" own the nation and the people have become plantation workers of Slavelandia.*

Indeed, as we have noted, one of our Top Trends for 2026 is a Gen Z RevolutionWith a dismal future in site, the young people across the globe are taking to the streets in protest of the establishment governments.

There is no clearer proof than Zorhan Mamdani – a young man that hardly anyone heard of a year ago – winning the New York City mayoral race. Broke, busted and seeing only harder times ahead, it was young voters that flocked to the polls to vote for a man that calls himself a Democratic Socialist... who promised them free bus rides, free child care, low rents, government grocery stores for cheaper products etc., in the largest city in America.

Again, as the facts prove, the "Bigs" are getting bigger and the multi-billionaire family that owns the trillion dollar Walmart chain – along with the billionaire and multi-millionaires who keep getting richer – has become the way of much of the world.

TRENDS ON THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC FRONT

WHEN THE ECONOMY FALLS, JOBS GO WITH IT

Layoffs in January were the highest to start a year since 2009, according to outplacement firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas. The firm noted there were 108,435 layoffs for the months, up 118 percent from the same period a year ago and 205 percent from December 2025. Planned hiring dropped 13 percent from January 2025 and down 49 percent from December. Jobless claims for the week ending Jan. 31, 2026, totaled 231,000, the firm noted.

As the death of journalism continues, the Jeffery Bezos-owned Washington Post laid off one-third of its staff last week, affecting 300 people in what was referred to by the newspaper as a strategic reset.

According to data from the layoff-tracking website Layoffs.fyi, global technology companies and startups cut 24,818 jobs in January across several companies.

In the retail sector, Target will lay off 500 people as the company restructures under its new CEO.

The job cut trend will increase this year as we have detailed in this and previous Trends Journals. This is week 166 that we have been reporting on the latest round of job cuts.

Government Layoffs:

- British Columbia, Canada – Large-scale layoffs of public employees due to budget cuts
- Environment and Climate Change Canada – 840 layoffs

Bank and Financial Layoffs:

- Block, the payments group behind Cash App and Square – Up to 1,000 layoffs possible
- First Financial Bancorp – 56 layoffs
- KPMG – 200 layoffs of executive assistants in Australia as it outsources to Philippines
- SMBC Group/Jenius Bank – 33 layoffs
- Tesco Bank – 160 layoffs
- UBS – Up to 3,000 layoffs possible in the second half of the year as it integrates with Credit Suisse
- Wells Fargo – 161 layoffs

Layoffs:

- Baxter International – 3 percent of staff at its North Carolina facility
- Boeing Defense Division – 300 layoffs
- Calmont Beverage Company, Inc. – 67 layoffs
- Christian Broadcasting Network – 8.4 percent of its U.S. employees
- CVS Health Aetna – 313 remote workers
- Designer Brands – Number of layoffs not provided
- Drax energy company – 450 layoffs
- Enphase Energy microinverter supplier – 160 layoffs
- Expedia – 100 layoffs in Austin, Texas
- Farmington School District (New Hampshire) – Layoffs possible due to budget cuts
- Fibercorp – 1,800 layoffs this year in Italy through “early retirement” program
- Forrester – 120 layoffs

- General Motors – Cutting a shift at its Oshawa, Canada assembly plant, 500 layoffs
- Hazel Health – 135 layoffs
- Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey – 242 layoffs
- Idaho State University – 45 layoffs
- International Motors – 300 layoffs
- Intrepid Studios – 210 layoffs
- Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust – 47 layoffs as the UNESCO World Heritage Site transfers to the National Trust's care in March
- Liberty Dental Plan – 30 layoffs at its Tampa, Fla. location
- Maersk Slashes – 1,000 layoffs
- Mercer County school district (New Jersey) – 30 layoffs possible
- MercyOne medical center (Mason City, Iowa) – 34 layoffs
- Naples Grande – 235 layoffs
- National Lab of the Rockies – 130 layoffs
- Ocado – 1,000 layoffs
- OraSure Technologies – Number of layoffs not provided
- Republic National Distributing Co – Number of layoffs not provided
- Riot Games – 80 layoffs
- Roseburg Forest Products – 146 layoffs at Riddle Plywood facility
- Santa Monica College – 70 layoffs
- Saskatchewan Polytechnic – 23 full-time and part-time employees
- Scope3 – Number of layoffs not provided
- Small Precision Tools Inc. – 30 layoffs
- Smartsheet – Number of layoffs not provided
- Sturm, Ruger & Co. firearms manufacturer – 90 layoffs
- Sumo Digital (United Kingdom) – Number of layoffs not provided
- Target – 500 layoffs
- The College of Wooster Ohio – 22 layoffs
- The Warehouse Group – 270 layoffs
- T-Mobile – 400 layoffs in Washington
- Topa Topa (Ventura, Calif.) – 15 layoffs
- Vornado – 72 layoffs
- Washington Post – 300 layoffs
- Workday – 400 layoffs

GOING OUT OF BUSINESS TRENDS

Closures continue to hit the retail and restaurant industry due to rising costs and declining demand.

Eddie Bauer clothing retailer is expected to file for bankruptcy and close its remaining 200 stores in the U.S. and Canada. Quiz, Scottish clothing retailer, is closing 40 stores in the United Kingdom and laying of 408 people.

Darden Restaurants will close its Bahama Breeze restaurant brand over the next 12 to 18 months. Yum Brands will close 250 Pizza Hut restaurants.

Convenience stores in Korea decreased by nearly 1,600 locations last year due to market saturation.

Bankruptcies:

- Big Rock Sports, Chapter 7
- Circle Furniture, Chapter 7
- Creamy Treats Inc. ice cream company, Chapter 11
- Eddie Bauer expected bankruptcy filing and closing its 200 remaining stores in the U.S. and Canada.
- Flipcause, online donation platform
- MTF Enterprises, a Subway operator with 43 stores in Maine, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, Chapter 11
- NFN8 bitcoin mining operation
- Robert Bearden Inc., a Southeast regional trucking carrier, Chapter 11

Closures:

- 3 Doors Down Cafe' (Portland, Ore.)
- Adept Plastic Finishing facilities (Wixom, Mich.)

- Alaskan Dream Cruises – Closing business operations and canceling future cruises
- ALDI – Closing its West Allis, Wis. location
- Alpek – Closing Pennsylvania PET recycling plant
- Angel City Brewery (Los Angeles, Calif.)
- Avantor Fluid Handling – Closing its facility in Morrisville, N.C., 54 layoffs
- Base Camp Outdoors (Dayton, Ohio)
- Birds and Bees nursery (Portland, Ore.)
- Bronx Brewery's Port Morris location (Bronx, N.Y.)
- Cafe Manna (Brookfield, Wis.)
- Cape Cod potato chip plant (Massachusetts)
- Cargill – Closing hydro plant in Kentucky
- Cascades – Closing three plants
- Chai Guy Cafe (Rochester, N.Y.)
- City Club (Alabama)
- Cultured Cheese Shop (Louisville, Ky.)
- Darden Restaurants – Closing Bahama Breeze restaurants
- Dirty Dough's Ballwin – Closing storefront in Missouri
- Enterprise's Cutts Restaurant (Dothan, Ala.)
- FedEx Ship Center (Middletown, Pa.)
- Foodie's Markets (Boston, Mass.)
- Found Vintage Market (Benson, Neb.)
- French Bakery & Delicatessen (Norfolk, Va.)
- Gemini Space Station – Leaving UK, Europe, and Australia market
- Glen-Worden Elementary School (New York)
- Grand Majestic Theater (Pigeon Forge, Tenn.)
- Green House Restaurant (Wilmington, N.C.)
- Hurricane Alley Waterpark (Corpus Christi, Texas)
- Jamaica Colosseum Mall (Queens, N.Y.)
- Jerry L. Garver YMCA (Ohio)
- Knoxville Preparatory School (Knoxville, Tenn.)
- Kuzzo's Chicken and Waffles (Detroit, Mich.)
- L'Fur's (Staten Island, N.Y.)
- Little Mexico Restaurant (Austin, Texas)
- Little Roadside Grill (High Point, N.C.)
- Magic City Brewing Company (Akron, Ohio)
- Maple Street Magnet School (New Hampshire) – Possible closure
- Mexican Connection (Dothan, Ala.)

- Milliken’s Cedar Hill Plant (Jonesville, S.C.)
- Ocean State Job Lot – Closing a location in Springfield, Mass.
- Old Louisville Co-op (Kentucky)
- Panama Bar and Cafe (Chico, Calif.)
- Pine Cleaners (Watertown, N.Y.)
- Pirate Fashions (Tampa, Fla.)
- Quiz retailer (Scotland) – Closing 40 stores in the United Kingdom and seven concessions in Ireland, 408 layoffs possible
- Red Bamboo (New York City)
- Remitly – Closed R&D hub
- Roberts Auto Sales (Modesto Calif.)
- Rocky’s Great Outdoors South Saginaw (St. Burton, Mich.)
- Roger Brown’s Restaurant and Sports Bar (Portsmouth, Va.)
- Salvation Army Thrift Store & Donation Center (North Bethesda, Md.)
- Sarasota Architectural Salvage (Sarasota, Fla.)
- Savage’s Bakery & Deli (Homewood, Ala.)
- Shop 'n Save on Brownsville Road (Pittsburgh, Pa.)
- Smithfield – Closing Massachusetts plant
- St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus Early Learning Center (St. Johns, Fla.)
- Steve’s Music (Montreal, Canada) – Closing four stores
- Suite Lounge (Atlanta, Ga.)
- The Bealls Florida department store (Ocala, Fla.)
- The Foods Co. (Sacramento, Calif.)
- The Rabbit Hole brewery (Akron, Ohio)
- Triphammer Bierwerks (Fairport, N.Y.)
- Yum! Brands – Closing 250 Pizza Hut locations

GERMANY LOST MORE THAN $1 TRILLION IN GDP OUTPUT SINCE COVID WAR, AS NEARLY 70 PERCENT OF GERMANS DISAPPROVE OF MERZ

Germany, Europe's biggest economy, has lost more than $1 trillion over the last six years as a result of the COVID-19 War, the Ukraine War, and President Donald Trump's tariffs against the country, according to data from the German Economic Institute.

RT, the Russian news outlet, reported that these issues have been the main drivers of economic losses. The report said Germany absorbed €360 billion in losses from 2020 to 2022 due to the COVID-19 War, and that drop was "compounded" by the Ukraine War, after Berlin decided to join the West in imposing sanctions on Russian energy exports.

Germany was once Europe's biggest buyer of cheap Russian energy, which was important for its industrial economy. The German economy suffered two years of recessions and, in 2025, managed to see a 0.2 percent GDP growth, the report said.

Michael Groemling, a researcher at the German Economic Institute, said the current decade for Germany has been "characterized by extraordinary shocks and enormous economic adjustment burdens, which now significantly exceed the burden levels of previous crises" that have "paralyzed economic development."

The Bild newspaper, citing an INSA Institute survey, reported last week that 67 percent of Germans are dissatisfied with Chancellor Friedrich Merz's job performance. DW reported that Merz has faced backlash over his recent remarks about the country's general work ethic.

"Prosperity cannot be maintained with a four-day work week and an exaggerated work-life balance," he said last month. He also said the average German called out sick from work 14.5 days a year, and asked, "Is that really necessary?"

Germany's economy is the world's third biggest, but the country last year saw its largest number of insolvencies in the past 20 years, *The Economist* reported, citing the Leibniz Institute for Economic Research. DW, citing several economic forecasts, reported that Berlin's growth is expected to be weaker than previously expected, despite the country's investment in its military. (*See "WWIII: GERMANY APPROVES*

€50 BILLION IN MILITARY PURCHASES IN RUSH BEFORE 2029" 23 Dec 2025, "MERZ REPEATS VOW TO MAKE GERMANY THE 'STRONGEST CONVENTIONAL ARMY IN EUROPE,' VOWS €377B FOR WEAPONS" 4 Nov 2025, "MERZ'S LATEST COMMENTS ABOUT RUSSIA SHOULD BE SEEN AS A 'DECLARATION OF WAR,' WRITES WSWS" 7 Oct 2025, "NATO'S 'COALITION OF THE WILLING' TO PROVIDE UKRAINE WITH MORE LONG-RANGE MISSILES" 9 Sep 2025 and "NATO'S RUTTE SAYS BEIJING, RUSSIA PLANNING FOR 'LONG-TERM' CONFRONTATION" 9 Sep 2025.)

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that Germany's industrial output fell faster than expected in December, which was blamed on reduced car production, which fell 8.9 percent. (The report noted that production fell 1.1 percent in 2025.)

Data produced by Destatis showed that tariffs imposed on Germany from Washington contributed to a decline of 9.4 percent of exports to the U.S. in 2025.

TREND FORECAST: *Gerald Celente has said it is clear to see that Germany has seen two years of recession and last year the economy grew just 0.2 percent... which is still recessionary conditions. And now, given that the country's military buildup will be funded by debt, there are real risks that the nation's economy will worsen. (See "GERMANY, U.K. SHOW SIGNS OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY" 20 Jan 2025.)*

Celente has said that the costs of the COVID-19 War are incalculable and will be felt for generations. The lockdowns did next to nothing to save lives, but were very effective at killing the lives and livelihoods of billions across the globe. (See "DEFINITIVE PROOF: COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS DIDN'T WORK" 16 Dec 2025.)

EUROPE'S BIGGEST ASSET MANAGER SHUNS INVESTMENTS IN THE U.S.

Paris-based Amundi, with about €2.38 trillion in assets under management, is shrinking its exposure to the U.S. dollar and telling clients to steer clear of investments denominated in the currency.

Instead, Amundi sees greater opportunities for gain in Europe and emerging nations, CEO Valerie Baudson said in a *Financial Times* interview.

Without changes in American economic policy, "we will go on seeing a weakening of the dollar," she added.

The dollar's value has taken a beating since Donald Trump's declaration of a tariff war in April 2025. It has slumped further this year as Trump has implied the U.S. might seize Greenland by military force and has attempted to erode the independence of the U.S. central bank.

The dollar was "overinvested," Baudson said, adding that investors are showing "a will to diversify from U.S. assets in order to diversify from the dollar." That sentiment has been significantly responsible for the soaring price of gold, she pointed out.

Baudson spoke to the *FT* after the dollar hit a four-year low at the end of January, down 10 percent in 12 months against an assortment of other major currencies. Gold's price rose at least 65 percent over the same period.

The dollar's weakness also has boosted emerging economies, which saw their best year last year since 2017. Many developing nations have sovereign debts denominated in dollars and a weaker buck can make payments on the debt cheaper.

Amundi is not alone in shying away from dollar investments. In January, Pimco, a major U.S. asset manager, told investors that Trump's "unpredictable" policies heralded a "multi-year period of some diversification away from U.S. assets."

Natasha Brook-Walters, chief strategist guiding the investment of Wellington Management's $1.4 trillion portfolio, is buying euros and Australian dollars as a way of "expressing concerns about the [U.S.] dollar," she said.

TREND FORECAST: *As we have greatly detailed, much of the world has had enough of America's geopolitical and socioeconomic hegemony, thus they will be pulling away from the U.S. dollar.*

Also, as we have greatly detailed, America's debt level, which is increasing $6.17 billion per day – and will hit $39 trillion in less than a month from now – is also signaling the Death of the Dollar.

GOLD'S PRICE WILL REMAIN ALOFT THIS YEAR, ANALYSTS SAY

Gold's price will average $4,746.50 over this year, according to a January Reuters survey of 30 analysts. It was the highest annual average forecast the poll had recorded since it began in 2012 and more than 10 percent higher than the same survey recorded in October.

A year ago, another poll found commodities experts seeing gold at $2,700 in 2026.

"We are entering a period in which the legitimacy and resilience of the institutions and systems that have underpinned global economic and geopolitical stability for decades are being tested in ways not seen in a generation," GoldCore CEO David Russell said in comments quoted by Reuters.

Last week, gold prices suffered their worst two-day plunge since 1983, only to rebound as high as $5,100 on 4 February, its largest single-day gain in 17 years. The bounce seems to confirm investors' confidence in the metal as a haven for value.

On 29 January, the price neared $5,600 before diving to $4,403 on 1 February after Donald Trump nominated Kevin Warsh to be the next chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Analysts have said the risks sending gold's value higher will continue well into this year. Those concerns include international tension, rising U.S. debt, central banks' continuing competition for gold bullion, concerns about the Fed's independence, and investors' turn away from the dollar, Reuters noted.

“Gold’s thematic drivers will remain positive and we believe investors’ rationale for gold and other precious metals) allocations will not have changed,” Deutsche Bank analysts wrote in a note.

Central banks’ ongoing strategy of hoarding gold will help offset falling sales of gold jewelry in key Asian markets due to its lofty price, analysts told Reuters.

Silver’s price, which soared 147 percent in 2025 and surpassed $121 on 29 January, will average $79.50 this year, analysts said, not the $50 foreseen in October’s survey.

Many of the same reasons buoying gold’s value will support silver’s, as well as silver’s steady demand as an industrial commodity, which remains in short supply.

TREND FORECAST: *As detailed, the mainstream media pundits were way off in their gold forecasts. However,* ***The Trends Journal*** *called the bottom of gold prices at $1,850 per ounce in September 2023 and on 2 January 2024 we had forecast that it would be a Golden Year for Gold, and shine it did, with prices increasing nearly 30 percent.*

And last year Gerald Celente had forecast that gold prices would hit $5,000 per ounce by the end of 2025. And while he was off by about three and a half weeks – gold hit the $5,000 mark on 26 January of this year – J.P. Morgan said last year that gold would hit the $5,000 per ounce mark by the fourth quarter of this year.

With geopolitical uncertainty escalating, along with the Dot.com Bust 2.0 and Death of the Dollar, we maintain our trend forecast for gold the hit the $6,000 per ounce range by years end. See:

- “DEATH OF THE DOLLAR” (30 April 2014)
- “COULD STABLECOINS SAVE THE DOLLAR?” (9 Aug 2022)
- “BRICS COUNTRIES MOVING FASTER TO CBDC’S” (7 Feb 2023)
- “WHEN AND IF WILL THE DOLLAR DIE?” (28 Feb 2023)
- “SPOTLIGHT: BYE, BYE BUCKS—THE DEATH OF THE DOLLAR” (4 Apr 2023)
- “SPOTLIGHT: BYE, BYE BUCKS—THE DEATH OF THE DOLLAR” (18 Apr 2023)
- “SPOTLIGHT: BYE, BYE BUCKS—DEATH OF THE DOLLAR” (2 May 2023)
- “SAUDIS IN TALKS TO JOIN ‘BRICS’ BANK” (6 Jun 2023)
- “LULA WANTS SOUTH AMERICAN CURRENCY” (6 Jun 2023)
- “DE-DOLLARIZATION ‘IRREVERSIBLE’” (12 Sep 2023)
- “BLOCKCHAIN BATTLES” (10 Oct 2023)

- "BRICS TRADE BLOC ADDS FIVE MEMBER COUNTRIES" (9 Jan 2024)
- "DEATH OF THE DOLLAR: BRICS NATIONS WANT THEIR OWN COMMON CURRENCY" (21 May 2024)
- "U.S. DOLLAR DEATH AND THE DEATH OF AMERICA" (15 Apr 2025)
- "SPOTLIGHT: DEATH OF THE DOLLAR" (13 May 2025)
- "SPOTLIGHT: DEATH OF THE DOLLAR" (24 Jun 2025)

ECB HOLDS INTEREST RATE STEADY

The European Central Bank rate-setting committee (ECB) left the bank's key interest rate at 2 percent last week.

January's inflation rate was 1.7 percent, below the bank's 2-percent target. Core inflation, screening out energy and food prices, came in at 2.2 percent, lower than analysts expected, and should ease down to 2 percent "in the medium term," officials projected.

Also, the Eurozone eked out 0.3-percent growth in 2025's final quarter, beating some economists' forecasts of a smaller number.

The region's economy "remains resilient in a challenging global economy, the ECB said in a statement.

"We're in a good place," ECB president Christine Lagarde told reporters. "Inflation is in a good place."

Futures traders are betting on a 25-percent chance of another ECB rate cut this year.

TREND FORECAST: *A 0.3-percent growth rate may be better than many had expected but it does not put the 20 countries of the Eurozone "in a good place."*

Much of the growth in spending, scant though it is, is due to governments building up their militaries and repairing infrastructure. The region's private sector remains in the doldrums. Indeed, as Gerald Celente has detailed, economies grow when the products manufactured are bought by the nation's consumers. The products now being

produced are just enriching the military industrial complex and bringing the nations deeper into debt.

Europe has yet to discover a new private-sector growth path. Until it does, it will continue an over dependence on debt-funded public spending, trading a short-term benefit for a debt crisis later on.

BANK OF ENGLAND NARROWLY FREEZES KEY INTEREST RATE

By a 5-4 vote, Bank of England (BoE) officials held the central bank's interest rate untouched at 3.75 percent last week, as economists had expected. However, the closeness of the vote was a surprise.

The U.K.'s inflation rate was 3.4 percent in December. Bank and government officials expect it to fall sharply in coming months as energy prices drop, food inflation eases, and government cost-cutting measures adopted last fall show results. The rate could decline to 2 percent as early as April, BoE governor Andrew Bailey has said.

If the pace of price increases slows as expected, the bank would cut its key rate, officials said. "All going well, there should be scope for some further reduction in the [policy] rate this year," Bailey told reporters. "All going well" means that a reduction in inflation is not a blip but that it remains at or near 2 percent for an extended time.

Three of the five officials voting to hold the rate steady advocated "a more prolonged period of policy restriction" to ensure inflation continues to slide in the right direction.

Those who voted for a rate reduction expressed worries that inflation is too low, not giving businesses enough financial room to grow wages and profits.

The BoE was conservative in adjusting its U.K. growth forecasts last week. It trimmed its expectation from 1.2 percent to 0.9 percent for 2026. The bank now expects the jobless rate to reach 5.3 percent, not the 5.1 percent it had foreseen previously.

A bank survey found that employers expect to raise workers' compensation by an average of 3.4 percent this year, a rate the BoE said will be consistent with bringing inflation to 2 percent.

TRENDPOST: *When economic growth was sinking, the BOE cut a quarter point from its rate four times last year. Now the U.K. still has the highest inflation rate among Western developed economies. Therefore, the bank remains cautious in its rate policy. Britain also continues to wrestle with the sour economic consequences of not only their leaving the European Union, its three years of COVID lockdowns destroyed the lives and livelihoods of tens of millions. Need more proof? Once the European pub capital, there have been over 15,000 pub closures since the COVID War began in 2020.*

THE LUXURY INDUSTRY'S KEY MARKET RETURNS, SORT OF

Chinese customers are once again shopping in the country's luxury boutiques, but they are fewer in number and spending less, *The Wall Street Journal* discovered.

After seeing sales languish since early 2020, Burberry reported an upturn in last year's third quarter. Richemont, the conglomerate that owns Cartier, Monte Blanc, and Piaget, among other brands, said its sales improved then also.

Ralph Lauren reported revenue in China grew 30 percent in the company's most recent quarter. LVMH, luxury's largest conglomerate, opened a Louis Vuitton boutique in Shanghai recently that is "drawing thousands of visitors a day," the *WSJ* noted.

China edged into the luxury industry's revenue stream early in this century. As the country's economy boomed, its expanding class of well-off consumers came to account for 35 percent of luxury houses' worldwide sales by 2019.

During this century's teen years, home values in Chinese cities rose by 50 percent and personal incomes were expanding by 10 percent a year.

Then more than three years of drastic, rolling anti-COVID lockdowns, followed by a collapse of home values amid a still-unresolved real estate crisis, dropped China's share of the industry's sales to 23 percent last year.

Home equity and home values account for 60 percent of household wealth in China. Although the country's equity markets have perked up recently, home prices have fallen 40 percent since late 2021. That has prompted consumers to save to replace their lost wealth, which has given the consumer economy little in the way of discretionary spending.

Chinese households are saving an average of a third of their incomes, the *WSJ* said. In the U.S., the figure is 5 percent.

Now real estate prices seem to be stabilizing in key population centers such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, economic centers that are creating pockets where some households feel free to begin spending again on luxury items.

Domestically produced baubles such as Songmont handbags are now competing with traditional European brands. Chinese luxury products typically are priced at four or five times their manufacturing cost, compared with the tenfold markup that European houses place on their goods.

That sets new strictures on European luxury houses, Richemont CEO Nicholas Bos told the *WSJ*. Chinese luxury shoppers "are becoming much more demanding, discerning, and differentiating when it comes to their choice of brands," he said.

"The days when shoppers queued around the block for a Chanel or Louis Vuitton handbag aren't coming back soon," the *WSJ* concluded.

TREND FORECAST: *Like the auto and apparel industries, luxury brands will be squeezed into a smaller market space by a government-fanned nationalism that favors Chinese-made goods over the foreign imports that once represented quality and sophistication.*

The trouble for Western companies is that Chinese goods are now close to, if not equal in, quality with imports while being lower in price.

The spotty revival of the West's luxury sales in China will continue but not recover to anything like its previous scale.

As a result, the luxury industry will continue to shrink in size and scope as it figures out how to attract a younger cohort while still charging prices that denote exclusivity.

We have reported on the luxury industry's tumult in articles including:

- *"SALES OF LUXURY GOODS SLOWS" (17 Oct 2023)*
- *"ESTEE LAUDER SHARE PRICE CRASHES AFTER COMPANY SLASHES EARNINGS PROJECTION" (7 Nov 2023)*
- *"LUXURY CONGLOMERATE RICHEMONT REPORTS DISAPPOINTING SALES" (14 Nov 2023)*
- *"ANOTHER LUXURY BRAND REPORTS THIRD-QUARTER SLUMP" (21 Nov 2023)*
- *"LEAN TIMES FOR LUXURY BRANDS" (12 Dec 2023)*
- *"LUXURY RETAILERS INDITEX, FARFETCH SEE A BLEAKER FUTURE" (19 Dec 2023)*
- *"BURBERRY CUTS 2O24 GUIDANCE" (16 Jan 2024)*
- *"RETAILERS' SHARE PRICES FALL ON WEAKER SALES AND FORECASTS" (12 Mar 2024)*
- *"SHARE PRICE OF LUXURY CONGLOMERATE KERING DIVES 14 PERCENT" (26 Mar 2024)*
- *"LUXURY FIRM LVMH POSTS DISAPPOINTING QUARTERLY RESULTS" (23 Apr 2024)*
- *"LUXURY BRANDS DIVERGE AS INDUSTRY NAVIGATES POST-COVID ECONOMY" (30 Apr 2024)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: LUXURY INDUSTRY IN TRANSITION" (21 May 2024)*
- *"LUXURY STOCKS SLUMP ON CHANEL'S WARNING; LAUREN DISAPPOINTS" (28 May 2024)*
- *"HUGO BOSS SHARE PRICE SLUMPS AS LUXURY MARKETS CONTINUE TO SHRINK" (23 Jul 2024)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: HARD TIMES IN HIGH FASHION. THIS TREND, IS NOT YOUR 'FRIEND'" (30 Jul 2024)*
- *"L'OREAL GROWTH SLOWS ON CHINA SLUMP" (6 Aug 2024)*
- *"AMEX STOCK DROPS AS ANALYSTS WARN OF WEAK CONSUMER SPENDING" (27 Aug 2024)*
- *"FAST-FASHION GIANT MISSING PROFITABILITY TARGET" (1 Oct 2024)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: RETAIL ON THE ROPES" (8 Oct 2024)*
- *"LUXURY INDUSTRY STILL PAYING THE PRICE FOR CHINA'S WEAKNESS" (22 Oct 2024)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: THE LUXURY INDUSTRY'S VERY BAD YEAR" (29 Oct 2024)*

- *"SPOTLIGHT: LEAN TIMES IN THE LUXURY BUSINESS" (5 Nov 2024)*
- *"LUXURY COMPANIES MISS FINANCIAL TARGETS" (19 Nov 2024)*
- *"LUXURY INDUSTRY SHRUGS OFF LOSS OF MIDDLE-TIER CUSTOMERS" (3 Dec 2024)*
- *"RICHEMONT'S LUXURY SALES CLIMBED IN DECEMBER" (21 Jan 2025)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: TROUBLES CONTINUE IN THE LUXURY BUSINESS" (11 Feb 2025)*
- *"LUXURY GROUP KERING'S SALES DIVE" (18 Feb 2025)*
- *"ANOTHER LUXURY HOUSE REPORTS A BAD YEAR" (11 Mar 2025)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: LUXURY INDUSTRY'S PROSPECTS GO FROM BAD TO WORSE" (29 Apr 2025)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: TROUBLES CONTINUE FOR THE LUXURY INDUSTRY" (6 May 2025)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: THE SHRINKING LUXURY INDUSTRY" (20 May 2025)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: TARNISH ON THE LUXURY INDUSTRY" (27 May 2025)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: LEAN TIMES FOR THE LUXURY INDUSTRY" (3 Jun 2025) (3 Jun 2025)*
- *"LUXURY BRANDS SLOW PRICE HIKES AS CUSTOMERS BALK" (29 Jul 2025)*
- *"SOTHEBY'S LOSES $248 MILLION IN 2024" (16 Sep 2025)*
- *"PRESSURED BY PARENT COMPANY, COTY SLIMS DOWN" (7 Oct 2025)*
- *"KERING REPORTS THIRD CONSECUTIVE DROP IN QUARTERLY REVENUE" (28 Oct 2025)*
- *"LUXURY FIRM MUST DOWNSIZE, REBALANCE, CEO SAYS" (9 Dec 2025)*
- *"LUXURY FIRMS FORCED TO DISCOUNT WIDELY IN 2025" (13 Jan 2026)*
- *"THE LUXURY INDUSTRY DECLINES FURTHER" (3 Feb 2026)*

KPMG WANGLES DISCOUNT ON ITS AUDIT, CLAIMING AI CUT THE COST

International business services giant KPMG negotiated a lower fee for its annual audit, arguing that the auditor used artificial intelligence and therefore faced less expense in carrying out the complex task, people familiar told the *Financial Times*.

The company told Grant Thornton UK, another giant accounting firm, that KPMG would find a new auditor if Thornton didn't accede to the demand.

Most such companies were quick to embrace AI, which is well-suited to financial analyses, but it has been unclear how much of a savings the technology is providing and whether any savings are being reflected in client's invoices.

In addition to telling Thornton to cut its bill, KPMG said that because Thornton has been its auditor for several years, it already knows the business well enough to work more quickly with or without AI.

A public filing shows KPMG paid $357,000 for the audit, 14 percent less than the previous year's bill of $416,000.

"High-quality audits rely heavily on expect human judgment, so our fees reflect both the cost of our people and the cost of the technology that supports them," Grant Thornton said when asked to comment.

In reality, accounting fees have risen in the past three years to help companies cover their massive AI investments, which often have involved training workers to use the technology effectively, according to figures from data service Ideagen Audit Analytics.

The research company's latest survey showed accounting fees rising in every European country except one last year.

TREND FORECAST: *Now that an iconic financial firm like KPMG has beaten down a fee by pointing to AI, others will try the same tactic. However, only companies that are equal in size or larger than a supplier or service provider will succeed. The demand is a power play and the most powerful player will win any such contest.*

TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU

STELLANTIS WRITES OFF $26.5 BILLION AS SHIFT TO EVs STALLS

Stellantis – the Amsterdam-based conglomerate that owns Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Maserati, Ram, and 11 other passenger vehicle brands – is writing down the value of its electric vehicle (EV) operations by €22.2 billion for 2025, or about $26.5 billion as its transition to electric mobility has stalled out.

The move is “reflecting significantly reduced expectations for EV products,” the company said in its statement announcing the loss of value.

The EV market in the U.S. also has braked as consumers balk at high sticker prices, stiff costs of insurance and repairs, and a lack of reliable public charging infrastructure. In Europe, sales of Chinese-made EVs are overpowering those of European and American brands.

Previously, Ford took a $19.5-billion charge against its sagging EV operation. General Motors announced a $6-billion write down as it slims and restructures its EV plans.

Stellantis’s news drove its share price down 25 percent to its lowest since the holding company was formed in 2021. The write down is now larger than the company’s market value.

Stellantis now expects to record a net loss of €19 billion to €21 billion in the second half of fiscal 2025. It also has canceled its dividend payment.

It expects to burn through as much as €1.6 billion in the fiscal year’s second half and will issue up to €5 billion in non-convertible subordinated bonds.

"These actions will contribute to preserving a strong balance sheet, with approximately €46 billion in industrial available liquidity at year-end," it said.

“The charges announced today largely reflect the cost of overestimating the pace of the energy transition that distanced us from many car buyers' real-world needs, means and desires,” CEO Antonio Filosa said in a statement.

“The reset we have announced today is part of the decisive process we started in 2025 to once again make our customers and their preferences our guiding star,” he added.

It might not be enough to save the company, according to portfolio manager Fabio Caldato at AcomeA SGR, which owns Stellantis shares. The jaw-dropping charge-off was not unexpected, he told clients in a note.

“Further encouraging data is needed to restore full investor confidence in Stellantis, also because we are not seeing strong signs of recovery in the automotive semiconductor cycle, which could limit the group's sales recovery potential,” he added.

The write downs include about €6.5 billion in cash payments expected to be spread over four years from 2026 because the company is canceling contracts that carry a cancellation penalty.

“Whilst an impairment was very much expected, the magnitude and larger cash-out component at €6.5 billion, albeit spread over four years to suppliers, is a key negative," Citi analysts wrote in a note.

To raise cash, Stellantis is selling its 49-percent share in a Canadian EV battery factory to its South Korean partner, LG Energy Solutions.

Now Stellantis risks steering too sharply away from EVs, Gartner analyst Pedro Pacheco warned in a Reuters interview.

“There is an overreaction in terms of the strategic pivoting,” he pointed out. “They need to go into this and do things right because their survival might depend on this.”

TREND FORECAST: *With a weakening Chinese market for foreign vehicles, a slow global passenger vehicle market, and a delay in the worldwide shift to electric mobility, Stellantis is on a knife edge.*

Given the industry’s context, it is likely that Stellantis will shut down some of its brands, such as the obscure Abarth electric sportscar and Opel, the 125-year-old German compact sedan. It also is likely to sell others to cut costs and raise cash.

There also is a good chance the conglomerate will dissolve and auction off all of the car brands it owns.

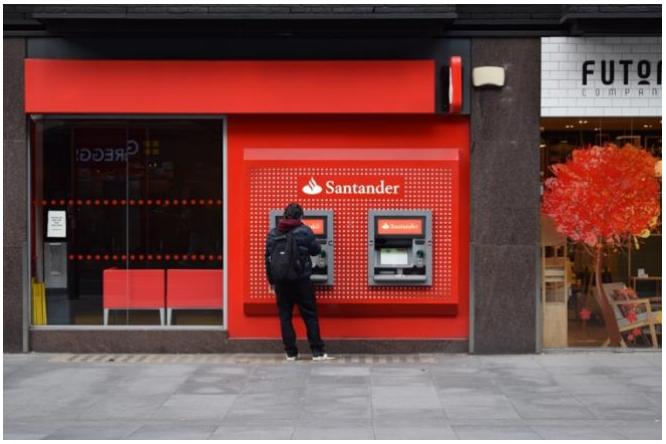
The EV industry has followed some harrowing twists and turns, as we have reported in articles including:

- *"ELECTRIC VEHICLES TO KILL GAS POWERED CARS? DON'T BET ON IT" (19 Jul 2017)*
- *"NEW ENERGY VEHICLES" (11 Dec 2018)*
- *"ELECTRIC CARS STALLING" (5 Nov 2019)*
- *"ELECTRIC VEHICLES" (11 Dec 2019)*
- *"SPECIAL UPDATE: HOW AND WHEN ELECTRIC VEHICLES WILL GO MAINSTREAM" (21 Sep 2021)*
- *"ELECTRIC CARS CAN POLLUTE MORE THAN GAS GUZZLERS, STUDY FINDS" (16 Nov 2021)*
- *"EV BUMPS IN THE ROAD GETTING BIGGER" (15 Nov 2022)*
- *"ELECTRIC VEHICLES AMONG THE LEAST RELIABLE, CONSUMER REPORTS SAYS" (22 Nov 2022)*
- *"EV'S GROWTH IN MARKET SHARE WILL SLOW" (17 Jan 2023)*
- *"MORE EVIDENCE EV'S ARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL WRECK" (17 Mar 2023)*
- *"ELECTRIC VEHICLES' DIRTY DILEMMA" (20 Jun 2023)*
- *"EV FABULISM WON'T HEAL THE EARTH, BUT WILL ENRICH ELITES" (18 Jul 2023)*
- *"PRICES FOR EV METALS CRASH" (24 Oct 2023)*
- *"U.S. ELECTRIC VEHICLE SALES HIT THE BRAKES" (31 Oct 2023)*
- *"MSM CRACKS IN EV NARRATIVES BEGIN TO SHOW" (31 Oct 2023)*
- *"EV SALES SLUMP IN U.S., EUROPE" (14 Nov 2023)*
- *"THE EV NARRATIVE IS BREAKING DOWN ON A HIGHWAY NEAR YOU" (19 Dec 2023)*
- *"EV GO FU" (Top Trend, 2 Jan 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024 EV GO FU: 2023 EV SALES WERE A DEBACLE" (9 Jan 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU: EV SALES TANK IN EUROPE" (23 Jan 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU: LITHIUM PRICE CRASHES AS GLOBAL EV DEMAND SLOWS" (30 Jan 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024 EV GO FU: SPINOFFS" (6 Feb 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (13 Feb 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (5 Mar 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU: BYD CUTS EV PRICES IN CHINA" (12 Mar 2024)*
- *"THE LATEST IN EV GO FU: CAN A SUB 30 THOUSAND TESLA TURN AROUND THE EV SKID?" (12 Mar 2024)*

- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU" (26 Mar 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU: CENTURY-OLD BATTERY DESIGN STALLS EVs" (26 Mar 2024)*
- *"BIDEN EV MANDATES AND THE DREAM OF 'CARLESS CITIES'" (26 Mar 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2023: EV GO FU" (23 Apr 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (28 May 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (18 Jun 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU: TOYOTA GOES FULL RETRO, RE-ENGINEERS PISTON ENGINE" (2 Jul 2024)*
- *"EV BREAKDOWNS AND DIRTY PFAS TECH: THE LATEST IN 'EV GO FU'" (16 Jul 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (16 Jul 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (23 Jul 2024)*
- *"SPOTLIGHT: TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU" (30 Jul 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (13 Aug 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (27 Aug 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU: VOLVO DELAYS TRANSITION TO ALL-EV LINEUP" (10 Sep 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU: VOLVO DELAYS CONSTRUCTION OF EV BATTERY PLANT" (17 Sep 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU: EUROPEAN COMMISSION VOTES TO SET TARIFFS ON CHINESE EVS" (8 Oct 2024)*
- *"TECHNOCRACY BRIEFS: AMERICAN TAXPAYERS FUELING CHINA MILITARY INNOVATION, AND EV SCHOOL BUSES BREAKING DOWN ACROSS U.S." (15 Oct 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU: LUCID SEEKS CASH, WILL SELL ANOTHER 262.4 MILLION SHARES" (22 Oct 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024, EV GO FU: AUTOMAKERS TURN TO PLUG-IN HYBRIDS. CONSUMERS TURN AWAY" (29 Oct 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (5 Nov 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (26 Nov 2024)*
- *"TOP TREND 2024: EV GO FU" (23 Dec 2025)*
- *"GM TAKES $6-BILLION CHARGE AS VALUE OF EV OPERATION SHRINKS" (13 Jan 2025)*
- *"EVS' 2026 SALES PACE WILL BE SLOWEST IN FIVE YEARS, ANALYSTS SAY" (13 Jan 2026)*

SPOTLIGHT: BIGS GETTING BIGGER

SANTANDER BUYS AN ENLARGED U.S. PRESENCE



Spanish bank Banco Santander has agreed to pay about $12.3 billion in cash and stock to take over Webster Financial, a Connecticut bank with roughly $80 billion in assets and 177 branches throughout the New York City region and in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The “strategically significant” acquisition will place Santander among the 10 largest U.S. retail and commercial banks by assets, the *Financial Times* said, and one of the leaders in the U.S. Northeast.

Santander, a major European lender, operates ATMs in the U.S. and also makes auto loans there but otherwise has a limited presence. Webster will become a wholly-owned subsidiary still operating under its own name.

Webster stock owners will receive $48.75 in cash for each of their shares plus 2.0548 Santander depository shares. The deal values Webster at $75 a share.

Mid-level banks are being pressured to combine with larger ones in order to cut costs and compete with megabanks, money market funds, the widening crypto industry, and financial technology firms edging into banking functions.

Webster, with a larger than average exposure to the troubled commercial real estate market, was a likely takeover candidate.

The new deal is the culmination of CEO Ana Botin’s plan to reshape the business.

In May 2025, Santander sold its Poland operation for €6.8 billion to the Erste Group in Vienna. In July, it signed an agreement to buy the British TSB Banking Group for £2.65 billion, giving Santander 28 million Britons as customers and making it the third largest U.K. bank.

Santander is now done buying other banks, CEO Ana Botin said in announcing the new deal. “No more purchases – and we’re not thinking about selling anything either,” she added.

FEDEX HEADS GROUP BUYING PARCEL LOCKER BUSINESS FOR $9.2 BILLION

FedEx and private equity firm Advent Holdings lead a group that is buying InPost, a Polish firm operating a chain of parcel locker sites across Europe. The agreed price is €15.60 per InPost share, setting the acquisition’s value at about €7.8 billion, or roughly $9.2 billion.

With FedEx’s backing, InPost will expand across Europe. In exchange, FedEx will be able to deliver parcels to customers’ automated InPost lockers, which will save the company some stops at individual addresses in areas InPost serves.

“InPost and FedEx intend to enter into commercialization agreements that are expected to enable both businesses to benefit from complementary strengths and a shared vision," Hein Pretorius, chair of InPost's supervisory board, told reporters.

The two companies will remain independent operators, he noted.

InPost was formed in 2021 but has failed to thrive as competition grew and rapid expansion minimized profits, Reuters reported. The expansion included buying competitor Yodel in the U.K. and a Spanish delivery business.

Coming under private ownership, InPost plans to expand operations the Benelux countries, France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, it said. It also will target the U.K., the European region’s largest e-commerce market.

FedEx and Advent Holdings will each own 37 percent of the company. InPost CEO Rafal Brzoska will own 16 percent. The remaining 10 percent will be held by the Kellner family of Czechoslovakia.

Forty-eight percent of outstanding shareholders have agreed to the deal; 80 percent are needed to close the purchase, the buyers said in a statement. If not enough are persuaded, the buying group could increase its offer.

“The proposed price is likely to be viewed by most of the market as moderately attractive rather than opportunistic,” analysts at Austria’s Erste Group wrote in a note.

SWISS INSURANCE GIANT WILL TAKE OVER BRITISH COUNTERPART

Zurich Insurance has come to an agreement on “key terms” in its effort to buy Beazley PLC, a U.K. holding company whose insurance subsidiaries operate in Asia, Europe, and North America.

Zurich raised its offer to £13.10 a share after Beazley’s board refused the £12.80 Zurich had offered in January. That increased the deal’s value to about £8 billion.

Beazley’s board will recommend shareholders approve the sale if Zurich formalizes its offer by 11 February, it said.

Taking over Beazley would enable Zurich to expand its lines of business beyond property and casualty coverage into specialty areas including aviation, construction, energy, and shipping, Zurich CEO Mario Greco said in a statement. Beazley also has expertise in ensuring cyber risks.

The combination is complementary, he added, saying “we are strong where they are trying to grow.”

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS BUYS COMPLEMENTARTY CHIP MAKER FOR $7.5 BILLION

Texas Instruments (TI), which makes “analog” computer chips that control signals in industrial and automotive devices, is paying $2.31 a share in cash for Silicon Labs, a manufacturer of chips used in wireless things.

This year, Silicon Labs’ share price has lagged the tech-centric NASDAQ index, which has jumped 20 percent since 1 January. The company’s shares rocketed up more than 48 percent on news of the sale.

The deal is TI’s largest in almost 15 years. In 2011, it paid $6.5 billion for National Semiconductor, another chip company.

TI, with a market value of about $202 billion, is a major supplier to Apple for its consumer devices. Its stock price rose 14 percent in late January after the company announced a strong outlook based on the growth of artificial intelligence data centers.

TWO MORE MINERS MERGE

Canada-based Eldorado Gold will buy Foran Mining for about C$3.8 billion, roughly $2.79 billion in U.S. currency. Foran’s stockholders will receive 0.11 of an Eldorado share for each of their Foran shares.

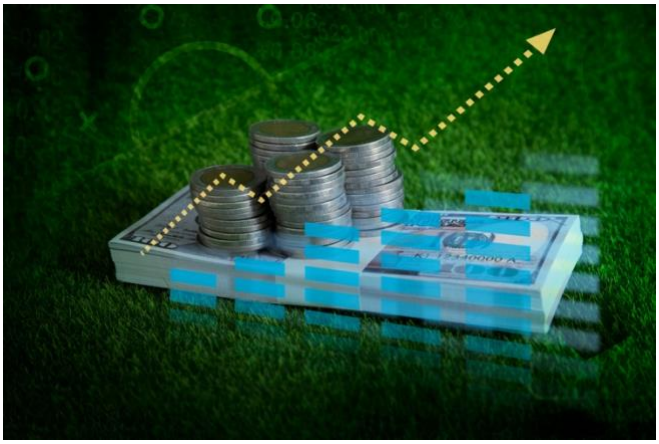
Eldorado’s investors will own about three-quarters of the new entity; Foran’s shareholders will own the remainder. The merged company will continue to be named Eldorado Gold.

The combined company will produce about 900,000 ounces of gold next year, the two firms said in a joint statement. Some of that will come from two projects scheduled to begin delivering ore in mid-summer. One is the Skouries mine in Greece. the other the McIlvenna shaft in Saskatchewan.

The enlarged portfolio also includes assets in copper, which recently set yet another record price as the computer chip, electrical, and electronic industries scramble to keep up with the buildout of artificial intelligence infrastructure.

The combination is the latest in an industry awash in cash as the price and demand for industrial and precious metals continue to climb.

KKR FINALIZES PURCHASE OF SPORTS INVESTING FIRM



U.S. private equity pioneer KKR has agreed to pay about $1.4 billion to take over Arctos Partners, a Dallas asset management firm that buys passive minority stakes in sports franchises to provide capital to team owners.

Arctos, founded in 2019, is now the largest investor in sports worldwide, with about $15 billion worth of assets in its portfolio.

KKR will pay $300 million in cash plus $1.1 billion in KKR shares to buy Arctos.

The deal brings KKR into the growing realm of retail investors who want to own a piece of a sports team long-term, the *Financial Times* said.

The merger creates a new unit within KKR called KKR Solutions that will be helmed by Ian Charles, an Arctos co-founder. The new unit will continue its sports specialty but also will offer financing to other asset managers.

The new division has the potential to grow to become “an over-$100-billion business,” KKR co-CEO Scott Nuttall told the *FT*.

With backing from KKR, Arctos will have access to skills in asset-based lending, real estate finance, and insurance to make available to its sports clients for activities such as building stadiums and negotiating media rights, Charles said in a statement.

Arctos and KKR began talking in mid-2024 when two key Arctos investors wanted out. Discussions gradually grew from the idea of KKR taking a minority stake to buying the entire company.

The deal is another consolidation among private equity firms, in which smaller and specialized businesses unite with larger asset managers with broader portfolios.

THE ISRAEL WAR

ISRAELI INVADERS TERRORIZE WEST BANK VILLAGES, IDF LOOKED ON

The Israeli Defense Forces sat back with glee and watched Israeli invaders (that morons and imbeciles call “settlers”) crash, burn, rob and steal across two West Bank villages, while Palestinians were beaten, had sheep stolen, and property damaged, as conditions in the area continue to worsen, as Israelis carry out these terror attacks without any repercussions.

Haartez reported last week that attacks occurred in Khirbet al-Halawa and nearby Khirbet al-Fakhit that resulted in three Palestinians being beaten to the point that they needed to be airlifted to hospitals. The settlers stole flocks of sheep and set properties on fire, the report said. All while IDF troops watched and did nothing, despite their supposed mandate to intervene, being the occupying power.

The attack in Halawa occurred after a settler called his friends after reportedly provoking a fight with residents in the village. The report said dozens of settlers materialized, along with IDF troops. At least one of the settlers were armed and many carried clubs.

The report said at the beginning of the settler attack, some IDF troops tried to prevent the livestock theft, but they faced fury from the group. They eventually relented and allowed the settlers into the pens.

Haaretz reported that at about the same time as the attack on Halawa, more settlers attacked Khirbet al-Fakhit to steal more livestock.

The UN said in a statement last week that about 694 Palestinians were displaced in the West Bank in the past month, which represented the highest tally since the Hamas attack in October 2023. Al Jazeera reported that “settler violence has become a key driver of forced displacement.”

Allegra Pacheco, director of the West Bank Protection Consortium, told the outlet that there has been “no pressure” applied on these settlers by Israel, “and so the settlers feel it.”

“They feel the complete impunity that they’re just free to continue to do this,” Pacheco said. “All eyes are focused on Gaza when it comes to Palestine, while we have an ongoing ethnic cleansing in the West Bank and nobody’s paying attention.”

DropSite News reported that 10,000 Palestinians have been internally displaced inside the West Bank since October 2023. That number does not include the over 30,000 who were displaced in three refugee camps during Israel’s January 2025 Operation Iron Wall.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Israel committed war crimes during the operation, which resulted in the illegal displacement of at least 32,000 Palestinians who had been living in refugee camps and the demolition of 850 homes inside the Jenin, Tulkarem, and Nur Shams.

Jamal Jumaa, the coordinator of the grassroots Stop the Wall Campaign, told the outlet that Israel is attempting to "annex the largest possible area of the occupied West Bank."

"Since the war on Gaza, this strategy has severely intensified, and what we're seeing is that settlers and the army are not only attacking area C, but also area B, and even area A at times," he said. (Area A is considered the location where the Palestinian Authority has the most control.)

***TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal** has reported extensively on Israel's attempt to make life in the West Bank a living hell for Palestinians, as it works to annex the territory. (See "UN: RECORD HIGH NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS DISPLACED IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK IN 2025" 27 Jan 2025, "ISRAEL APPROVES 19 NEW SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED WEST BANK" 23 Dec 2025, "ISRAELI LAND STEALING MOBS RAMP UP ATTACKS IN THE WEST BANK AS INTERNATIONAL FOCUS REMAINS ON GAZA," "SEN. COTTON INTRODUCES BILL TO BAN USE OF THE 'WEST BANK' IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT" 10 Dec 2024 and "HUCKABEE SAYS THERE'S NO SUPPORT FOR A TWO-STATE SOLUTION AMONG EVANGELICAL LEADERS"11 Feb 2025.)*

It is worth reminding readers that the Israeli land steal is in violation of the Geneva Convention and UN Article 242. But regardless of this violation, the Western nations support Israel's crimes against humanity and those who condemn Israel for its human rights violations are labeled "antisemites."

The International Court of Justice ruled in October that Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem is a "de facto annexation" enforced through "systemic discrimination, segregation, and apartheid."

The court called on Israel to mandate the "evacuation of all settlers from existing settlements and the dismantling of the parts of the wall constructed by Israel that are situated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as allowing all Palestinians displaced during the occupation to return to their original place of residence."

***TREND FORECAST:** Israeli settlers will continue to steal all of the territory it wants because Washington is, and has been, completely owned by his Zionist donors. Israel has laughed off claims from some European countries that they will begin to recognize Palestine as a state, and said clearly that while the so-called agreements are signed,*

they'll just continue taking the land on the ground in violation of the Geneva Convention and UN Article 242. See related articles below:

- *"ISRAELI END GAME IN PALESTINE" (1 Aug 2014)*
- *"MIDDLE EAST MADHOUSE" (16 Sep 2019)*
- *"ISRAEL'S NEW 'SETTLEMENT' PLAN CONDEMNED BY U.S., EUROPE" (2 Nov 2021)*
- *"TOP TREND 2023, MIDDLE EAST MELTDOWN: ISRAEL RAMPS UP DEADLY RAIDS ON PALESTINIANS; GUNMAN RETALIATES IN FRONT OF SYNAGOGUE" (31 Jan 2023)*
- *"ISRAEL WANTS TO KEEP STEALING PALESTINIAN LAND: GAZA NEXT" (28 Nov 2023)*
- *"UN SAYS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST USE 'ALL ITS INFLUENCE' TO END GAZA WAR" (9 Jan 2024)*
- *"GENOCIDE: ISRAELI POLITICIANS SEE GAZA'S FUTURE FREE OF PALESTINIANS" (16 Jan 2024)*
- *"UN CHIEF CALLS GAZA DEATH TOLL 'HEARTBREAKING' AS NUMBER SURPASSES 25 THOUSAND" (23 Jan 2024)*
- *"GAZA LAND-GRAB: THOUSANDS OF 'SETTLERS' READY TO 'RESETTLE' POST-GENOCIDE" (30 Jan 2024)*
- *"LAND-STEAL: TOP ISRAELI MKs WANT POST-WAR SETTLEMENTS IN GAZA" (30 Jan 2024)*
- *"ISRAELI WEST BANK ISRAELI LAND STEALER: GAZANS WILL MOVE, JUST STARVE THEM" (6 Feb 2024)*
- *"ISRAELI FORCES KILLING PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK WITH 'NEAR TOTAL IMPUNITY'" (6 Feb 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL SYSTEMATICALLY DESTROYS RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS IN GAZA TO CREATE BUFFER" (6 Feb 2024)*
- *"U.S. TELLS ICJ: ISRAEL CAN KEEP ITS STEALING OF PALESTINIAN LAND" (27 Feb 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL BOMBS TO RUIN RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AND UNIVERSITY IN RAFAH" (12 Mar 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL STEALS 3 MILES OF LAND IN OCCUPIED WEST BANK IN VIOLATION OF GENEVA CONVENTION" (26 Mar 2024)*
- *"RAFAH EVACUATION NOT POSSIBLE, RED CROSS WARNS" (30 Apr 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL STEALING MORE LAND IN WEST BANK" (7 May 2024)*
- *"ISRAELI COLONIZERS RAMPAGE IN WEST BANK TOWN AS IDF LETS IT HAPPEN" (14 May 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL: F-CK THE ICJ, WE'LL KEEP BOMBING GAZA INTO RUINS" (28 May 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL LAND STEALING PACE ESCALATES" (4 Jun 2024)*
- *"NETANYAHU PUSHES TO KEEP STEALING PALESTINIAN LAND" (18 Jun 2024)*
- *"SMOTRICH SAYS NETANYAHU AGREES TO KEEP STEALING PALESTINIAN LAND" (25 Jun 2024)*
- *"G7 CONDEMNS ISRAEL'S DECISION TO STEAL MORE WEST BANK LAND" (16 Jul 2024)*
- *"ICJ: ISRAEL STEALING PALESTINIAN LAND 'UNLAWFUL' AND CONSTITUTES APARTHEID" (23 Jul 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL STEALS MORE PALESTINIAN LAND, THIS TIME AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE" (30 Jul 2024)*

- *"ISRAEL STEALING MORE LAND: NETANYAHU SAYS WEST BANK IS ISRAEL'S HOMELAND" (13 Aug 2024)*
- *"ISRAELI 'SETTLER' ATTACK SO BARBARIC, EVEN NETANYAHU CRITICIZES" (20 Aug 2024)*
- *"NETANYAHU TURNS WEST BANK INTO WARZONE AS HE WANTS TO WIPE OUT PALESTINIANS AND STEAL MORE LAND" (10 Sep 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL'S SMOTRICH: WE WILL KEEP STEALING PALESTINIAN LAND TO MAKE A 'GREATER ISRAEL'" (29 Oct 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL TO ANNEX THE WEST BANK" (26 Nov 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL STEALS MORE LAND IN GAZA CALLING IT 'MILITARY ZONES'" (10 Dec 2024)*
- *"ISRAEL STEALING MORE LAND IN SYRIA" (21 Jan 2025)*
- *"ISRAEL STEALING MORE LAND IN SYRIA, FEAR GRIPS SOUTHERN TOWNS" (11 Mar 2025)*
- *"ISRAELI SETTLERS ATTACK WEST BANK TOWN IN LATEST ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE RESIDENTS" (18 Mar 2025)*
- *"UN: ISRAEL CONTINUES TO STEAL PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES AT HIGH RATE" (25 Mar 2025)*
- *"ISRAEL INTENSIFIES ITS EFFORT TO TURN THE WEST BANK INTO GAZA" (6 May 2025)*
- *"ANOTHER GAZA: ISRAEL WRECKS THE WEST BANK IN RELENTLESS OFFENSIVE" (13 May 2025)*
- *"TRUMP WANTS TO TURN GAZA INTO A 'FREEDOM ZONE' ONCE ISRAEL'S DONE WITH ITS GENOCIDE" (20 May 2025)*
- *"'GAZA IS OURS': THOUSANDS OF ISRAELIS TORMENT PALESTINIANS ON JERUSALEM DAY" (27 May 2025)*
- *"ISRAEL KEEPS STEALING MORE LAND IN NEW WEST BANK" (3 Jun 2025)*
- *"ISRAELI LAND STEALING MOBS RAMP UP ATTACKS IN THE WEST BANK AS INTERNATIONAL FOCUS REMAINS ON GAZA" (19 Aug 2025)*
- *"ISRAEL RAMPS UP LAND STEALING IN WEST BANK, U.S. APPROVES" (26 Aug 2025)*
- *"ISRAEL STEALING MORE PALESTINIAN LAND, BEGINS DIVIDING GAZA IN HALF" (4 Nov 2025)*
- *"'YELLOW LINE' IN GAZA = ISRAEL STEALING MORE PALESTINIAN LAND" (16 Dec 2025)*

NO OUTRAGE: ISRAEL RAMPS UP AIR ATTACKS ON LEBANON, DESPITE CEASEFIRE

Israel has carried out at least 50 air strikes inside Lebanon in January, which is roughly double the number of attacks carried out in December, despite a ceasefire that was agreed upon in November 2024 to end the war between Tel Aviv and Hezbollah, Al Jazeera reported.

The report, citing the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), called the new attacks a "clear and dangerous" increase in bombings that ultimately mock the truce as "little more than ink on paper."

The group said the ongoing strikes "create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty for civilians."

Maureen Philippon, NRC's country director in Lebanon, said in the statement that aid agencies are "still dealing with the aftermath and consequences of months of destructive conflict, which left much of Lebanon in ruins. We call on Israel's allies to do everything they can to stop these attacks on civilian areas and villages."

Chemical Warfare?

Joseph Aoun, the Lebanese president, said Tel Aviv committed a crime on the environment last week when the IDF released a "toxic" substance in the country's south. (Video emerged of the incident.)

"This is an environmental and health crime against Lebanese citizens and their land," he said, Al Jazeera reported, citing Lebanon's National News Agency.

"These dangerous practices that target agricultural lands and the livelihoods of citizens and threaten their health and environment require the international community and relevant United Nations organizations to assume their responsibilities to stop these attacks," he said.

The Guardian reported that the incident occurred last Sunday and that UN peacekeepers stationed in the vicinity had been warned to stay inside at the time of the

dusting. The report said the substance was identified as glyphosate, which is considered a powerful herbicide. The report, citing the World Health Organization, said the chemical is likely "carcinogenic to humans."

The paper said Israel has been accused of using white phosphorus in bombings that have long-term implications for the environment and agriculture system.

Hisham Younes, the founder and president of Green Southerners, told The Guardian that the spraying did not occur over an "intact ecosystem or healthy soil capable of better absorbing or accommodating such impacts."

"It occurs over land and vegetation already severely stressed and degraded by the intensive use of white phosphorus, incendiary munitions and the accumulation of heavy-metal residues and other contaminants resulting from sustained bombardment," he said.

TRENDPOST: *As the sick joke goes, when Israel agrees to a ceasefire, that means the other party ceases and the Israelis fire.*

The Trends Journal *has reported extensively on how Israel continues to violate the November 2024 ceasefire on a near-daily basis. (See "VIOLATING CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT, ISRAEL KEEPS BOMBING LEBANON" 9 Dec 2025, "ISRAEL HAS LAUNCHED MORE STRIKES ON LEBANON" 2 Dec 2025, "ISRAEL USED WIDELY BANNED CLUSTER MUNITIONS IN ATTACKS ON SOUTHERN LEBANON" 25 Nov 2025 and "BOMBS AWAY OVER LEBANON: ISRAEL KEEPS VIOLATING CEASEFIRE DEAL" 11 Nov 2025.)*

We've noted that the so-called ceasefire was based on UN Security Council resolution 1701, which called on Hezbollah fighters to pull out of southern Lebanon and beyond the Litani River. Israeli forces would have to withdraw from Lebanon under the agreement. Both sides accused the other of failing to honor the deal.

Israel has insisted that its troops remain in five positions across southern Lebanon. The IDF claimed that the Lebanese Army has been slow to remove Hezbollah, but Beirut said it has been slowed because of the IDF presence in the region.

In October, the UN published a report that in the year since the ceasefire was announced, the IDF carried out over 500 air strikes and killed at least 108 people, including 71 men, 21 women, and 16 children. More than 80,000 residents in southern Lebanon remained displaced.

TREND FORECAST: *The Israelis will continue to punish civilians in Lebanon because no nation stopped them before, and none will do so now. Indeed, pro-Zionist American President Donald Trump prides himself on his support for Israel, and, occasionally, gets patted on the head like a good dog. (See "TRUMP'S PRO-ISRAEL MEGADONOR MIRIAM ADELSON PUSHES FOR THIRD TERM, WILL PICK UP THE CHECK" 23 Dec 2025.)*

NETANYAHU WANTS U.S. TO BE UNBENDING IN DEMANDS DURING NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to push the Trump administration to force Iran to give up the farm and essentially make concessions to all of Tel Aviv's demands – or face the wrath of the U.S. military being positioned in the region for war.

A source with knowledge of Israeli leadership's thinking told the *Financial Times* that Netanyahu is demanding an agreement that will remove all enriched uranium from the country and stop all uranium enrichment. Netanyahu wants a limit on Tehran's ballistic missile production, and he wants Iran to give up on its support of proxies in the region.

"Otherwise, Israel supports an attack to overthrow the regime."

The Iranians have been clear that they would like to negotiate to avoid war, but its ballistic missile program and nuclear enrichment is off the table. While Trump has sailed the USS Abraham Lincoln Strike Group into the region as a show of force, the Iranians showcased their missile capabilities by unveiling the Khorramshahr-4 missile that can travel 1,242 miles at Mach 16 outside the atmosphere, according to Iran's Press TV.

"Although Iran has come to the negotiating table, it has no intention of giving up its military power," Brig. Gen. Yadollah Javani of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps said. "Iran negotiating from position of strength; U.S. back in talks in humiliation."

The U.S. and Iranians held indirect talks in Muscat on Friday and Abbas Araghchi, Iran's foreign minister, told reporters after that he believed the talks were off to a good start.

The Times of Israel noted that Netanyahu is expected to meet with Trump in Washington on Wednesday to discuss Iran and will insist that "any negotiations must include restrictions on ballistic missiles and an end to support for the Iranian axis."

***TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal** has long reported that Netanyahu's main goal, decades before the Hamas attack in October 2023, was to be the sole power in the Middle East region, so other countries are forced into submission and Israel can steal all the land that it wants to achieve a Greater Israel. (See "TRUMP, NETANYAHU CLAIMED IRAN WAS CLOSE TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS, EXPERTS DISAGREE" 24 Jun 2025, "TRUMP LISTENS TO NETANYAHU, SAYS IRAN MUST HAVE ZERO ENRICHMENT, HINTS AT MILITARY STRIKES" 10 Jun 2025, and "NETANYAHU VOWS TO 'FINISH THE JOB' ON IRAN DURING MEETING WITH RUBIO" 18 Feb 2025.)*

Netanyahu has said, "Iran is the head of the octopus, and you see its tentacles all around from the Houthis to Hezbollah to Hamas."

Israel sees Iran as significantly weakened after Bashar al-Assad's fall in Syria. Hezbollah in Lebanon is also seen as weakened after the brief war in 2024.

Netanyahu once said that he and Trump see "eye to eye" on the Iran issue.

While the media continues to report on Israel's determination to stop Iran from going nuclear, rarely is it noted that Israel possesses at a minimum some 90 plutonium-based nuclear warheads and has produced enough plutonium for 100-200 weapons, though not officially acknowledged.

Thus, it is OK for Israel and other nations to have nuclear weapons but not Iran… or, for that matter, North Korea. Only nations sanctified by a higher political order are permitted to have nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction.

Indeed, Germany who was hated by the West for its World War I and World War II wars is now considering going nuclear. As reported by the New York Post last week:

“Berlin is considering developing its own atomic weapons to bolster Europe’s nuclear umbrella and the US’s own stockpile in the region, according to German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

Speaking before the German parliament Thursday, Merz said the country is in talks with its partner nations on the possibility of extending Europe’s nuclear arm, which currently involves Britain and France as the sole nations in the continent with atomic weapons.

‘These talks are taking place,’” Merz said.

***TRENDPOST**: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is coming to the United States on Wednesday to meet with President Trump.*

He has met with Trump eight times since Trump took office last year, and Netanyahu’s office said the reason for this meeting is because "The prime minister believes that all negotiations must include limiting the ballistic missiles, and ending support for the Iranian axis."

However, while Netanyahu and the U.S. want the negotiations to include Iran's ballistic missile developments and Tehran’s support for armed groups in the region, and go beyond its potential nuclear operations, Iran has refused to include those issues in the talks.

ISRAEL TAKES NEW STEP TO ANNEX WEST BANK, AND NOBODY WILL STOP IT

Israeli officials on Sunday took another step towards fully annexing the West Bank by removing hurdles for “settlers” to purchase land inside the territory in direct contradiction to international law.

The New York Times reported that the changes were made by the country’s security cabinet and were seen as another blow to

any possibility of a Palestinian state, a “strategy that the government has been pursuing for years.”

Bezalel Smotrich, the country’s finance minister who is a settler, told reporters that the new measures “fundamentally changed illegal and civil reality” inside the territory and helped bury the “idea of a Palestinian state,” according to the *Financial Times.*

“We are normalizing life in the territories, removing bureaucratic barriers, fighting for the land, and deepening our presence throughout the Land of Israel,” Smotrich said, according to CNN.

There are now 700,000 Jewish Israelis living inside the West Bank.

The *FT*’s report noted that the changes kill a provision that did not allow Jewish citizens to purchase land in the territory. The report also said Palestinians will no longer play any role in the decision process when it comes to new permits in Hebron.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry urged President Donald Trump to intervene. Trump said last year that he would “not allow Israel to annex the West Bank. The White House issued a statement after the new measures were announced and said Trump opposes the annexation of the occupied West Bank.

“A stable West Bank keeps Israel secure and is in line with this administration’s goal to achieve peace in the region,” a White House official told Al Jazeera.

The report said eight countries in the region rejected the announcement, including the UAE, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. They said in a joint statement that the move was an effort to entrench “settlement activity, and enforce a new legal and administrative reality in the occupied West Bank, thereby accelerating attempts at its illegal annexation and the displacement of the Palestinian people.”

The International Court of Justice ruled in October that Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem is a "de facto annexation" enforced through "systemic discrimination, segregation, and apartheid."

The court called on Israel to mandate the "evacuation of all settlers from existing settlements and the dismantling of the parts of the wall constructed by Israel that are situated in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as allowing all Palestinians displaced during the occupation to return to their original place of residence."

Israel's stealing of Palestinian land is in direct violation of the Geneva Convention and UN Article 242. *(See "ISRAEL APPROVES 19 NEW SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED WEST BANK" 23 Dec 2025, "ISRAELI LAND STEALING MOBS RAMP UP ATTACKS IN THE WEST BANK AS INTERNATIONAL FOCUS REMAINS ON GAZA" 19 Aug 2025, "SEN. COTTON INTRODUCES BILL TO BAN USE OF THE 'WEST BANK' IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT" 10 Dec 2024 and "HUCKABEE SAYS THERE'S NO SUPPORT FOR A TWO-STATE SOLUTION AMONG EVANGELICAL LEADERS" 11 Feb 2025.)*

CNN noted that the new measures call for the IDF to expand its enforcement mandate into Areas A and B, which were supposed to be under the control of the Palestinians under the Oslo Accords. The report noted that these two areas represent 40 percent of the West Bank.

The Palestinian Authority also rejected the new mandate and said it is nothing more than the "continuation of the comprehensive war waged by the occupation government against the Palestinian people and an unprecedented escalation targeting the Palestinian presence and its national and historical rights across all Palestinian land," CNN reported.

TRENDPOST: *The Hamas attack on 7 October 2023 was a gift for Netanyahu, who knew that there were no limits on how much he can punish Palestinians and steal their land. (See "NETANYAHU TURNS WEST BANK INTO WARZONE AS HE WANTS TO WIPE OUT PALESTINIANS AND STEAL MORE LAND" 10 Sep 2024, "ISRAEL*

STEALING MORE LAND: NETANYAHU SAYS WEST BANK IS ISRAEL'S HOMELAND" 13 Aug 2024, and "SMOTRICH SAYS NETANYAHU AGREES TO KEEP STEALING PALESTINIAN LAND" 25 Jun 2024.)

Peace Now, a settlement watchdog, told CNN in a statement that "Netanyahu promised to dismantle Hamas in Gaza, but in practice he chose to dismantle the Palestinian Authority, annul agreements Israel itself signed, and impose de facto annexation – in complete contradiction to the will of the people, Israel's national interest, and the clear position of President Trump."

GAZA DEATH TOLL

The official death toll in Gaza reached 72,037 and 171,666 people have been injured.

The death toll includes the 586 people killed by Israel since the announcement of the ceasefire in October. (Another 1,558 have been injured during that time and 717 have been pulled from the debris, according to Palestinian health officials.)

Indonesian Army Chief Maruli Simanjuntak told reporters that his country is prepared to send up to 8,000 soldiers to Gaza in part of a peacekeeping mission but said no number has been confirmed.

President Donald Trump's highly criticized peace deal called for the development of an international stabilization force.

The UN described how Gaza has become a wasteland and said out of 226,817 buildings identified through high-resolution imagery, "2,452 buildings have been assessed so far, comprising 11,465 housing units. Of these, 5,050 (44 percent) were

classified as destroyed and 6,415 (56 percent) as damaged, including 2,031 houses that are deemed uninhabitable."

WEDNESDAY: The IDF carried out another bloodbath in Gaza, killing at least 24 Palestinians, including five children and seven women. NPR reported that one of the children was a 10-day-old baby.

Dr. Mohamed Abu Selmiya, director of Gaza City's Shifa Hospital, posted on Facebook: "The genocidal war against our people in the Gaza Strip continues. Where is the ceasefire? Where are the mediators?"

The IDF said the attacks were in response to its forces coming under attack in the northern part of the enclave, which it called a "blatant violation of the current ceasefire agreement."

NBC News reported that at least 11 people were killed – mostly members from the same family – in a strike on a residential building in northern Gaza. The AP identified those killed as two parents, a 10-day-old girl, a 5-month-old cousin, and the grandmother.

TRENDPOST: *It is worth noting that Israel can kill as many Gazans as it wants simply by alleging that its forces came under attack.*

THURSDAY: Israel killed at least one Palestinian east of Khan Younis, medical sources told AA.

IMEMC noted that many victims have been unaccounted for because they "remain trapped beneath collapsed buildings or lie in streets that rescue crews cannot reach due to ongoing military operations, destroyed roads, and the lack of safe access for ambulances and civil defense teams."

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) accused Israel of continuing to impede the flow of humanitarian aid into the enclave and said "supplies, food, hygiene

kits, medicines and shelter items remain stuck in warehouses in Egypt and Jordan, banned from entering Gaza since March 2025."

UNICEF also said in a statement that while the ceasefire has provided some improvements for children living inside Gaza, "the situation remains extremely precarious and deadly."

"Since the beginning of the year, 37 children have been reported killed across the Gaza Strip," the statement read.

Stuart Casey Maslen, head of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, told AA that the actual Gaza death toll could be 200,000.

"We do not believe that that is the final total," he said, referring to the 73,000+ death toll. "That's the number of bodies that have been recovered. There will be more bodies under the rubble. It will take time before the exact number is known. A report by the Central Palestinian Bureau of Statistics said that the decline in Gaza's population was more than 10 percent," he told the outlet.

FRIDAY: Israel killed at least two Palestinians across the enclave.

SATURDAY: Israel killed another two Palestinians and injured another 25 in strikes across the enclave.

SUNDAY: The IDF killed another three Palestinians inside the Gaza Strip, including two men who died when a bomb detonated in northern Gaza's Beit Lahia, AA reported.

The report, citing eyewitnesses, said an Israeli drone dropped a bomb on the two men – a 33-year-old and an 18-year-old – who had been near a school in the city.

MONDAY: Israel killed another seven Palestinians, including a bombing on a residential building that had been sheltering individuals who had been displaced inside the enclave, according to Al Jazeera. The report said the strike occurred in Gaza City.

Israel has killed at least 581 people since the ceasefire was announced in October, add another 1,553 have been injured.

TUESDAY: Israel killed another seven Palestinians in Gaza, including four in a bombing on a residential building in Gaza City.

FEATURED TRENDS GUEST ARTICLES

LOCKED DOWN. ROUNDED UP. WAREHOUSED. THE RISE OF AMERICA'S CONCENTRATION CAMPS *by John & Nisha Whitehead*

In 2021, amid a global pandemic, warnings that the federal government might repurpose warehouses into detention facilities on American soil were dismissed as speculative, alarmist, even conspiratorial.

Five years later, what was speculation is a blueprint for locking up whomever the government chooses to target.

According to investigative reports, the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement are actively purchasing warehouses, factories and industrial buildings across the country for use as detention centers—often with little public notice, minimal oversight, and virtually no accountability.

This is no longer a warning.

It is a five-alarm fire.

With the Trump administration moving forward with plans to rapidly acquire warehouses for what could become a nationwide mass detention network, it's no longer a question of *whether* the government will expand mass detention to lock up Americans for defying its mandates but *when*.

This is how it begins.

The government already has the means, the muscle and the motivation. It has spent decades building a vast archipelago of prisons, detention centers, and emergency facilities capable of imprisoning large numbers of people.

While the Trump administration insists that it is only targeting the "worst of the worst"—murderers, rapists, gang members, pedophiles and terrorists—most of those being rounded up have no criminal record. Being undocumented is a civil violation, not a crime.

This is where we have to tread cautiously, because authoritarian regimes love to play Orwellian word games, and the current administration is no exception.

Case in point: DHS Secretary Kristi Noem claims that every single individual arrested or detained has committed a crime, but being *charged* with or even suspected of a crime is very different from being *convicted* of a crime.

When the Secretary of Homeland Security equates an arrest with a crime, she isn't just playing word games—she is effectively nullifying the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments' guarantee of due process and the presumption of innocence.

If the bar for being arrested is merely committing a crime, we'd all be locked up.

It may come to that eventually.

When you have a government in the business of rounding people up in order to fill warehouses and play to the optics of being tough on crime, it won't just be undocumented immigrants getting rounded up.

History has a name for what happens when governments abandon due process and begin locking people up for *who* they are rather than what they have done.

The next step is always logistical. Once the decision is made to detain people en masse, the state must find places to hold them—out of sight, out of reach, and outside the law.

That is where the warehouses come in.

Make no mistake: these are concentration camps in their earliest form, rebranded and revived for a new age.

This is what happens when any government claims the power to decide who belongs, who poses a threat, and who can disappear for the sake of order.

The legal framework already exists.

Under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the President and the military are authorized to detain individuals—including U.S. citizens—without access to family, legal counsel, or the courts if the government labels them terrorists.

That label can now be applied so interchangeably with the terms *anti-government* and *extremist* that it doesn't take much to be considered a terrorist anymore.

This is what happens when you put the power to determine who is a *potential* danger in the hands of government agencies, courts, and police, but also give those agencies sweeping authority to detain individuals and lock them up for perceived wrongs without due process.

It is a system begging to be abused. And it has happened *here* before.

The groundwork has been laid.

Now if you're going to have internment camps on American soil, someone has to build them— or repurpose existing structures to serve that function—and then staff them—and eventually fill them.

Today, DHS and ICE are buying up and converting warehouses, factories, and industrial spaces across the country into detention facilities. These buildings—designed for storage and logistics, not human beings—are being outfitted with fencing, surveillance systems, holding areas, and makeshift sleeping quarters. Many operate outside the standards that apply to traditional correctional facilities, with fewer inspections, limited oversight, and little public visibility.

The government insists these warehouse detention sites are necessary to handle prisoner overflow, respond to emergencies, and maintain flexibility.

History tells a different story.

What begins as temporary becomes permanent. What is justified as exceptional becomes routine. And what is done to non-citizens has an uncanny way of expanding, especially when dissent, protest, or noncompliance are rebranded as threats to national security.

Once again, the language of emergency is being used to normalize extraordinary abuses of power.

Now, detention camps require not only buildings but lists of potential detainees, and here, too, the government is prepared.

For decades, the government has acquired and maintained, without warrant or court order, databases of individuals considered threats to national security.

In 2026, the static lists of the past have been replaced by "living" databases.

Fueled by agentic AI and mass data-scraping, the government's surveillance architecture no longer relies on manual updates. These AI systems autonomously crawl social media, financial records, and geolocation data in real-time, creating high-accuracy "threat profiles" that are virtually impossible to escape.

Once you are flagged by an algorithm that operates without human oversight, you aren't just a name on a list—you are a permanent node in a digital dragnet that follows you from your keyboard to the warehouse door.

The technology has simply caught up to the government's decades-old desire to categorize dissent as a national security threat.

Anyone seen as opposing the government—whether they're Left, Right or somewhere in between—is a target.

Which brings us to the inevitable conclusion: when the government claims the authority to broadly define who is a threat, uses taxpayer funds to erect a network of concentration camps across the country, and methodically builds databases identifying anyone seen as opposing the government as an extremist, the question is not *if* that power will be abused—but when and how often.

As I make clear in *Battlefield America: The War on the American People* and in its fictional counterpart *The Erik Blair Diaries*, this is the slippery slope.

If the price for fighting illegal immigration is the complete abdication of our constitutional republic, that price is too high.

The means do not justify the ends.

The police state's solutions to our so-called problems pose the greatest threat to our freedoms.

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His latest books The Erik Blair Diaries and Battlefield America: The War on the American People are available at www.amazon.com. Whitehead can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of

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THE HEART OF DARKNESS: *ISRAEL'S GOVERNMENT IS COMPLETELY EVIL* *by Philip Giraldi*

It is not for nothing that most of the world both abhors and condemns Israeli behavior, whether it be measured by the never-ending genocide in Gaza or the similarly driven terrorizing and deportation of the Palestinian population on the West Bank. Israel is intent on taking full control of historic Palestine and is willing to do whatever it takes to bring that about and unfortunately the United States has been its all too often enthusiastic accomplice in that effort. Beyond that, Israel has bombed and otherwise

killed its neighbors in Lebanon and Syria while also enticing Washington to join in the effort to attack Iran and bring about regime change in Tehran. Apartheid Israel, which has declared itself legally and ethnically a Jewish state, intends to become that in reality by eliminating all non-Jews from its ever expanding territory and it is willing to do whatever it takes to bring that about.

There is something that is a tad peculiar about the Jewish state's sense of identity in that it does not regard killing those who are non-Jews by any means possible as either a crime, or, more to the point, as a sin in spite of the prohibition included in its own Ten Commandments. Nor does Israel consider any agreements it enters into with other countries to be in any way binding on it and its leaders, witness the regular violation of the two ceasefires that Tel Aviv has entered into over Gaza, or its behavior regarding similar arrangements with neighbors Lebanon and Syria. In Lebanon and Syria, Israel is **currently spraying** "unidentified" though apparently toxic chemicals on farmland near the border to drive away local residents through destruction of their livelihoods. Israel does what Israel does and the United States, which was a guarantor of all the ceasefires as well as of the ongoing peace process, never says a word when Israel breaks the agreements and goes about killing more local inhabitants.

Israel's latest ploy is to bring about a United States attack on Iran to destroy that country's ability to strike Israel, making the Jewish state by default the regional dominant military and political power. Israel reportedly convinced Donald Trump not to attack Iran several weeks ago because there was concern that Iran would, as part of its defense, attack targets inside Israel that had the ability to support the American effort. In other words, Israel was seeking a solution to Iran that would not put itself at risk and would instead put the onus on the United States. One might point out that this is hardly the appropriate behavior for a country that is repeatedly praised as Washington's "best friend and closest ally." It is anything but that while Trump and the politicians are either too stupid or corrupted to realize that, or too intimidated by the Lobby, to respond as they should if the US interest were truly their priority in relationship to an Iran which does not threaten America in any way.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has now called for a meeting with Donald Trump for later this week, which would be the ninth meeting between the two since Trump's inauguration, far more than with any other foreign politician. Netanyahu **has asked to meet with Trump** to discuss options for the ongoing indirect discussions with the Iranians. Netanyahu's office released a statement that "The prime minister believes that all negotiations must include limiting the Iranian ballistic missiles, and ending support for the Iranian axis" of Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, which Israel perceives at the principal threats against it.

In any event, it is generally conceded that Trump will do what Israel wants. Netanyahu will also be seeking a plan of action whereby the US will attack and bring about regime change in Iran while also neutralizing its offensive capabilities. Israel meanwhile will stay out of the fight to avoid any damage from the Iranian arsenal. Neat, and any dead Americans resulting from that formula, most probably on US bases in the Persian Gulf region, will just be the cost of doing business with Netanyahu who will be leaving from his sessions with Trump with a smile.

Netanyahu is smiling because he always wins when dealing with American presidents while simultaneously treating the United States like a bit of dirty laundry that can easily be discarded or ignored whenever it is is not useful as a source of money, weapons and protection. Note the disregard for the damage done to the United States by the Jeffrey Epstein conspiracy which was without question **a major blackmail operation** up to the US presidential level run by Mossad to favorably influence policies towards the Jewish state. Even now with many incriminating documents revealed there is total resistance on the part of the Trump regime and the opposition Democrats to honestly expose what was done by our “good friends” in Israel.

But I have described Israel as uniquely evil and there is plenty of evidence for that outside of its treatment of the United States of America as some kind of vassal state that is a source of money and political and military support. As observed above, Israel has never complied with any agreement that it makes with foreign countries. During the course of the current ceasefire it has blocked **the entry of food or medicines** while also continuing to bomb and shoot Gazans, killing close of 600, including many children. Meanwhile, far from withdrawing its army from Gaza it has increased its foothold in the Strip, occupying close to 60% of the total area as a “Yellow” security zone, presumably leaving the rest as eventually intended for the Trump Gaza Resort or for Israeli settlers who have been appearing in the area in increasing numbers and even staking out new settlements.

As a gesture to indicate some measure of compliance with the ceasefire, last week Israel agree to **partially open the Rafah Crossing** from Gaza to Egypt which it controls, and the first to pass through were supposed to be those Gazans suffering from injuries and wounds requiring advanced medical treatment. Something like 22,000 Gazans were registered or lined up seeking passage and a long line of ambulances from the Egyptian side were waiting to help. Israel then closed the Crossing in spite of its commitment to open it and reportedly only let 150 injured Gazans pass through it with 50 Gazans who were already in Egypt allowed to return home from the other side.

Another story making the rounds is how the Israeli military **has now conceded** that its multi year offensive in Gaza has killed approximately 70,000 Gazans, a number that is being praised in some circles because it is considered an honest, though unfortunately brutal, appraisal. Some believe, however, it is meant to throw out a lower number so the real number will never be revealed. The 70,000 number is much higher than what has appeared in the Zionist controlled western media up until now but it is far below other estimates from reliable sources like the British medical journal *The Lancet* that place the deaths at 186,000, with most of the bodies still buried under the rubble. Some other conservative estimates believe that fully 12% of the original 2 million Gazan population has been killed, meaning close to 240,000.

And when one speaks of how evil Israel is, there is another issue which might be considered. Israel is sometimes described as the leading country in providing resources for organ replacements, a procedure sometimes euphemized as "organ harvesting." That appears to be true because the thousands of Palestinians who are held without charges in Israeli prisons are treated abominably, to include **having their organs removed** for marketing purposes if they die and even when they are still living. The evidence for that horrific behavior consists of the bodies of Palestinians that are released from prisons and given to their families for burial. Those bodies frequently have what are presumed to be their viable body organs as well as corneas or even skin removed prior to being returned. The organs are then marketed worldwide. The result is that organ donation in "Israel" is among the highest in the world, despite some religious restrictions and a relatively small population.

So I rest my case. These are not the sorts of things that countries with any sense of morality or respectability embrace. And unfortunately Israel is able to drag Donald Trump and the US Congress along with it, even making Washington do the real dirty work when it comes to confronting nations like Iran. But there are signs that the American public has become tired of the whole charade and Israel's role in it. The litmus test will come with the handling of the situation with Iran and we should be seeing what will happen there in the next week or two.

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THE COMING CONSTITUTIONAL ICE AGE *by Judge Andrew P. Napolitano*

Last fall during the opening of the United Nations in New York City, I recognized the face of a federal officer from his days working in law enforcement in New Jersey and mine as a trial judge. We chatted and I asked him what he was doing. He told me he worked for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE. I asked what ICE has to do with the U.N., and he told me that soon ICE will be everywhere.

When I asked if ICE has become a paramilitary force, answerable to the White House, he just smiled, as if to say, “Don’t quote me.” When I asked him why he was carrying two handguns and an AK-47 automatic rifle, he laughed and said, “I have more than you can see, judge!”

Since then, the president has used ICE to fulfill his promise of aggressive enforcement of immigration laws while cutting constitutional corners -- even to the point of arresting Americans, immigrants and aliens without arrest warrants; arresting infants, killing two Americans who posed no threat to ICE killers and then lying about it.

Government law-breaking and lying are destructive of our social fabric. We have hired a government to protect our freedoms and enforce the laws and to do so consistent with the constitutional restraints we have theoretically imposed on all government.

Does the government work for us or do we work for the government?
The Supreme Court has already ruled that even though it is a crime to lie to the government, it is not a crime for the government to lie to any person. This dastardly judge-made rule that has no basis in history, constitutional text or morality has led to a host of false confessions and trick home invasions as federal agents have lied their way into folks’ thinking and into their living rooms.

But this lying was usually confined to unique law enforcement venues. Until now. Now, in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi, the area of the United States subject to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, ICE lawbreaking and lying have received a judicial blank check to search and seize wherever, whatever and whomever it wishes.

Here is the back story.
Entering the United States illegally is a federal crime. When the government seeks to arrest a person it suspects has committed any federal crime, unless its agents have witnessed the crime being committed, the Fourth Amendment requires the government to present evidence of probable cause against the person to a federal judge and seek a warrant specifically describing the place to be searched or the persons or things to be seized.

Entering the U.S. legally and remaining here beyond the time limits imposed at the time of entry is not a crime and thus cannot be the basis for an application for an arrest warrant, as no judge would sign such a warrant.

In the Fifth Circuit, the feds no longer need an arrest warrant. A panel of two judges ruled last weekend that ICE agents can authorize each other to arrest whomever they

suspect of being in the U.S. without authorization and do so without an arrest warrant or presentation of evidence.

In a case seeking the judicial resolution of two competing values -- fidelity to the constitutional requirements of warrants and due process versus aggressive enforcement of federal immigration laws -- the court rejected the supremacy of the Constitution, which requires judicial warrants and a fair hearing before a neutral arbiter, and approved ICE arrests without warrants, anywhere in the Fifth Circuit.

There is no court ruling quite like this anywhere in the federal system, and we have seen in Minneapolis why an arrest warrant is necessary and due process is vital: Because the government cannot be trusted to comply with the Constitution, because the government makes mistakes, and because all persons are presumed innocent.

The colonists suffered grievously in 1765 at the hands of British soldiers enforcing the Stamp Act by entering homes ostensibly looking for stamps. The act was so controversial that Parliament rescinded it after a year. But Parliament did not rescind the Writs of Assistance Act, which permitted the use of general warrants to enter onto private property and seize property and persons as the soldiers wished.

A general warrant is not based on probable cause of crime; it is based on governmental need. The Founders knew that this was a meaningless standard because whatever the government wanted, it would claim that it needed. A general warrant did not name the places to be searched or the persons or things to be seized. Rather, it authorized the bearer to search wherever he wished and seize whatever he found. Hence the Fourth Amendment outlawed general warrants.

By authorizing the use of administrative warrants -- in which one ICE agent authorizes another to search or arrest, without naming the place to be searched or the persons or things to be seized -- the Fifth Circuit has subjected all persons in three American states to the tender mercies of ICE agents mimicking the British use of general warrants.

How did we get here?
We got here because of congressional indifference to constitutional norms and a judicial inclination to policymaking. The judiciary is the anti-democratic branch of government. It was not created to reflect public sentiment or establish public policy -- as Congress and the presidency were -- but to stand fast in protecting all persons from the popular branches.

The whole purpose of an independent judiciary is to protect moral and constitutional values. But not in the Fifth Circuit where ICE can effectively arrest whomever it wishes, without evidence, without a judicial warrant, without knowing the name of the person arrested and without bail. Add to this the infamous Kavanaugh stop doctrine -- in which Americans approached by ICE must be prepared to demonstrate citizenship on the streets -- and we see a constitutional ice age approaching.

To learn more about Judge Andrew Napolitano, visit https://JudgeNap.com.

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'FOREVER CHEMICALS' LINKED TO THREEFOLD HIGHER LIVER DISEASE RISK IN ADOLESCENTS *by Dr. Joseph Mercola*

Story at-a-glance

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also called “forever chemicals,” are found in drinking water, food packaging, cookware, and household products. They persist in the environment and build up in the body
- An Environmental Research study found that higher blood levels of certain forever chemicals were linked to almost three times greater likelihood of fatty liver disease among adolescents in high-risk families
- These findings show that adolescence is a sensitive window, as the liver is still adapting to growth and metabolic changes, allowing chemical exposures to influence liver fat storage and long-term disease risk

- Microplastics serve as carriers for PFAS, transporting them deep into tissues. Research shows that combined exposure to microplastics and PFAS causes greater damage than either pollutant alone
- Reducing exposure through water filtration and mindful product choices can help lower long-term chemical burden and protect metabolic health

Nearly every American carries some level of “forever chemicals” in their system.[1] These compounds, formally known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), are a large group of synthetic chemicals so resistant to breakdown that once they enter your body, some can linger for years. They’re used to make products slick, stain-proof, grease-resistant, or waterproof — from nonstick pans and fast-food wrappers to carpeting and rain jackets.

The liver receives the highest burden of forever chemicals as it filters these toxins from the blood. PFAS can interfere with the liver's ability to package and export fat, promoting fat buildup inside liver cells.Now, research shows that during adolescence, this interference carries a greater risk because the liver is still adapting to hormonal shifts, growth signals, and increased metabolic demands.

Adolescent PFAS Exposure Is Linked to Higher Fatty Liver Disease Risk

Fatty liver disease is now estimated to affect 7% to 9% of all children, and up to 41% of children with obesity. A recent study published in Environmental Research analyzed how exposure to various PFAS compounds may be contributing to this trend, particularly in adolescents and young adults from families with increased risk for metabolic conditions.

•Two PFAS compounds showed the strongest links to fatty liver disease — Higher blood levels of the forever chemical perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) were linked to nearly three times higher risk of fatty liver disease, while a newer replacement PFAS, perfluoroheptanoic acid (PFHpA), raised the risk by 1.7-fold.

The effect was stronger in older teens and those with genetic susceptibility. For families already dealing with metabolic concerns, including overweight or Type 2 diabetes, PFAS exposure represents an added stressor on the liver that isn’t picked up in routine checkups and often goes unnoticed.

•**This study builds on earlier research confirming the same pattern —** An earlier work published in Communications Medicine in late 2025[5] found that adolescents with double the PFHpA concentration in their blood had an 80% greater risk of fatty liver disease compared to peers with lower levels. Elevated PFHpA was also linked to more advanced liver injury, including inflammation and fibrosis (scarring).

Together, these results highlight adolescence as an important window for identifying environmental contributors like PFAS, when intervention may still prevent long-term metabolic damage. For a deeper look at how PFAS affects your health beyond liver disease, read "**Toxic and Tenacious — How 'Forever Chemicals' Are Damaging Your Health**."

Microplastics as PFAS Carriers — A Double Threat to Liver Health

PFAS don't always travel alone. Growing evidence shows that microplastics serve as both a reservoir and a transport system for forever chemicals, delivering them deep into your tissues and bypassing many of your body's normal protective barriers against chemical exposure.[7]

•**Microplastics form from the breakdown of larger plastics —** Common items such as packaging, textiles, and household goods degrade into microscopic fragments. Some of these fragments are manufactured with PFAS for durability or chemical resistance, while others absorb PFAS from the surrounding environment. Either way, the particles act as a direct and sustained source of internal exposure.

•**Inhalation is a primary route of exposure —** Microplastics circulate in indoor and outdoor air, and are small enough to evade upper airway defenses. Once inhaled, they reach the alveoli (the deepest region of the lungs), where oxygen exchange occurs. From there, they either embed in lung tissue or pass directly into circulation, carrying their chemical load to the liver, as well as the kidneys, brain, and other organs.

•**Microplastics contain a wide range of synthetic chemicals —** In addition to PFAS, these particles contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) like phthalates, bisphenol A (BPA), flame retardants, and stabilizers. These interfere with hormone signaling by mimicking or blocking natural hormones and altering how they are produced, transported, or cleared.

The effects span multiple systems, including metabolism, fertility, neurodevelopment, and immune regulation. Experimental models show that combined exposure to PFAS and microplastics produces additive and synergistic toxicity, causing greater harm than either chemical alone.

The body has no internal mechanism that can break down plastic polymers or reliably remove embedded microplastic particles once they enter tissue. The good news is that researchers are actively investigating strategies to help reduce the body's burden of persistent plastics and chemicals, including PFAS.

Some of this emerging research was discussed in my recent CBS interview, which is featured above. These findings and the ways these pollutants behave in human tissue are examined in detail in my upcoming book, "**Microplastics Cure: Total Body Cleanse**," which comes out soon.

How to Reduce PFAS Exposure and Manage Its Effects

Because PFAS are widespread and long-lasting, protecting your health as well as your family's means taking steps on two fronts — limiting new exposures and helping your body eliminate what's already built up. Here are some practical strategies to help you get started:

1.Filter your drinking water with a system designed to remove PFAS — If PFAS are in your household tap water, you're being exposed every time you drink, cook, or shower. Check your local water quality report or test your water using a PFAS-specific kit.

If contamination is confirmed, install a water filtration system certified to NSF/ANSI Standard 53 (for activated carbon) or Standard 58 (for reverse osmosis) — these certifications verify actual PFAS removal, which marketing claims alone do not guarantee.

2.Limit PFAS-containing products in your home — Avoid nonstick cookware, stain-resistant carpets and upholstery, and water-repellent clothing. If you have children, pay special attention to school uniforms, outdoor gear, and athletic wear that may be treated with water- or stain-repellent chemicals. Choose materials like cotton, wool, leather, or cast iron instead of synthetic, chemically treated options.

Food packaging is another major source of exposure. Microwave popcorn bags, fast-food wrappers, pizza boxes, and takeout containers are among the worst offenders, as they're often coated with PFAS to prevent grease and moisture from soaking through. Plastic packaging can also break down into microplastics. Whenever possible, cook at home, and transfer takeout food to glass or stainless steel containers rather than eating directly from the packaging.

Personal care products can also be hidden sources, so check labels for ingredients like polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) or anything containing "fluoro." Look for fluorine-free

certifications or use databases like the Environmental Working Group's (EWG) Skin Deep to help guide safer choices for your household.[9]

3.Consider blood or plasma donation if you are eligible — If you meet donation criteria, this is one of the most effective ways to lower PFAS levels in the body. Research shows that regular donations accelerate the removal of long-lasting compounds like forever chemicals, which otherwise persist for years.

4.Support liver and kidney function through daily habits — Eat sulfur-rich foods such as garlic, onions, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts to support the production of glutathione, the body's master detoxification compound, which binds to toxins so they can be eliminated. Pair this with adequate hydration using filtered water, which supports normal kidney function.

Because PFAS clearance depends partly on healthy mitochondrial function, reducing factors that impair mitochondria, including excess **linoleic acid** from seed oils like soybean, corn, and sunflower oil, may support your body's ability to process these chemicals. Limiting or avoiding alcohol further reduces strain on the liver and supports more efficient detoxification.

5.Support broader efforts to reduce environmental exposure — The widespread presence of PFAS in people's blood and environments is the result of decades of unregulated chemical use. While personal steps matter, broader policy change is needed to protect communities.

Support efforts to ban PFAS in consumer products, push for full ingredient transparency, and demand government-led testing and cleanup in contaminated areas. Each reduction in exposure — whether personal or collective — lowers the toxic burden on future generations.

5 Strategies to Support Liver Health

Reducing exposure to PFAS is only part of protecting your liver. You also need to supply it with the nutrients and inputs it needs to function well, repair cellular damage, and export stored fat. These five strategies focus on practical, foundational ways to support liver recovery and resilience over time:

1.Prioritize choline-rich foods — Choline is one of the most important nutrients for liver health because it helps move fat out of the liver and supports cell membrane

repair. A single hard-boiled egg can contain anywhere from 113 milligrams (mg) to 147 mg of choline, or about 25% of your daily requirement, making it one of the best choline sources in the American diet.

Muscle meats and fish also provide moderate amounts and fit easily into most diets. Some plant foods, including soybeans and cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts, contain smaller amounts but can still contribute to your overall intake.

2.Consider choline supplements if your diet falls short — If you struggle to get enough choline from food, supplementation may help, but the form matters. I recommend citicoline (also known as CDP-choline) because it is well absorbed and supports the production of key phospholipids that keep liver cells and mitochondria functioning properly.

At daily doses of 500 to 2,500 mg, citicoline has the added benefit of raising acetylcholine levels, which supports cognitive function. Moreover, it does not significantly increase trimethylamine N-oxide (TMAO), a metabolite linked to cardiovascular risk, compared to some other choline forms.

3.Increase your intake of other liver-supportive nutrients — Your liver needs certain nutrients called methyl donors — folate (B9), vitamin B12, and methionine — to run a vital repair process called methylation. This process helps regulate gene activity, manage inflammation, and carry out essential detox and fat metabolism tasks.

Without enough methyl donors, fat starts to accumulate and liver function slows down. Getting these nutrients through food helps keep your liver resilient and metabolically active. Key dietary sources include:

•**Folate (B9) —** Beef liver and dark leafy greens such as spinach and kale, and asparagus

•**Vitamin B12 —** Animal sources like wild-caught Alaskan salmon, pastured eggs, and grass fed dairy and beef; for vegetarians or vegans, consider taking a B12 supplement

•**Methionine —** High-protein foods like eggs, chicken, turkey, beef, and lamb

4.Support liver health with regular movement — Physical activity helps regulate blood sugar, increase insulin sensitivity, and stimulate fat transport out of the liver. You don't need a demanding workout routine. A **brisk 10- to 20-minute walk** after meals, daily stretching, and two to three sessions of **resistance training** totaling 40 to 60 minutes each week go a long way.

Waist circumference matters, too. More than 40 inches for men or 35 inches for women signals excess **visceral fat**, which is strongly tied to liver scarring. Shifting your focus toward losing inches around the waist, rather than just the number on the scale, gives you a more accurate measure of progress.

5.Get restorative sleep nightly — Your liver depends on quality sleep for repair and detoxification. Chronic sleep loss or disrupted sleep patterns interfere with glucose regulation, raise inflammation, and impair mitochondrial function in liver cells.

Aim for consistent sleep in a dark room, ideally at a temperature between 60 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit (15 to 20 degrees Celsius). Teenagers need eight to 10 hours of sleep per night, while adults need at least seven. Additionally, avoid late-night meals, as they can spike blood sugar and keep your liver metabolically active when it should be resting.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Forever Chemicals and Liver Disease

Q: How do I know if I've been exposed to PFAS?

A: You have almost certainly been exposed. PFAS are found in drinking water, food packaging, cookware, clothing, and household products, and studies consistently show detectable levels in the blood of nearly all Americans. Exposure often happens gradually over years, so you usually won't notice symptoms tied to a single source.

Q: What does PFAS do to liver health?

A: PFAS can disrupt how your liver handles fat, responds to insulin, and clears toxins. These disruptions raise your risk of developing fatty liver disease. Over time, this can lead to more serious issues like inflammation, fibrosis, or insulin resistance.

Q: Why does PFAS exposure matter more during adolescence?

A: The adolescent liver is still adapting to growth hormones and metabolic changes, making it more susceptible to chemical interferences like PFAS. Genetic differences and age further influence the risk, meaning two teens with identical PFAS exposure can have very different outcomes depending on inherited susceptibility and their stage of adolescence.

Q: How are microplastics linked to PFAS exposure?

A: Microplastics can carry PFAS on their surface and transport them into the body through inhalation or ingestion. Once inside, these particles can bypass normal detox

barriers and deliver the chemicals to organs such as the liver, increasing overall internal exposure to PFAS.

Q: What can I do to reduce exposure to PFAS in our home?

A: You can lower PFAS exposure in your home by focusing on the most common sources. Use a water filtration system that removes PFAS, especially for drinking and cooking. Avoid nonstick cookware and products treated to resist stains, water, or grease, including some carpets, furniture, and clothing.

Store and prepare food using glass, stainless steel, or cast iron, and check personal care products for ingredients that include “PTFE” or anything containing “fluoro.” These steps reduce the amount of PFAS entering your home on a daily basis.

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author[s] and do not necessarily reflect the views of **The Trends Journal**.*

NEW START NUCLEAR TREATY BETWEEN U.S. AND RUSSIA EXPIRES

The last remaining nuclear treaty between the U.S. and Russia that put a cap on how many nuclear weapons each country could have in its arsenal expired last week, raising new concerns of an arms race.

“Rather than extend ‘NEW START’ (A badly negotiated deal by the United States that, aside from everything else, is being grossly violated), we should have our nuclear experts work on a new, improved, and modernized treaty that can last long into the future,” Trump posted on Truth Social.

The New START Treaty placed a ceiling on the number of warheads and delivery vehicles that both countries can maintain. (1,550 warheads and 700 delivery vehicles).

Three sources told Axios on Thursday that the U.S. and Russia are close to agreeing to keep the terms of the 2011 deal going, despite not coming to an official agreement.

“We agreed with Russia to operate in good faith and to start a discussion about ways it could be updated,” one U.S. official told the outlet.

A 2024 Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) statement to Congress found that the Kremlin had been working to update its strategic nuclear force, including the development of its Sarmat heavy ICBM, the Yars ICBM, and the Dolgorukiy class SSBN, which are launched from submarines.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s 2025 assessment said Washington and Moscow have just about 90 percent of all nuclear weapons on the planet, about 10,500.

USNI News reported in May that a “nongovernmental estimate” indicates that Russia has about 1,718 deployed warheads, 12 ballistic-missile submarines carrying 192 SLBMs, and 58 strategic bombers.

The report noted that the U.S. and Russia no longer communicate about their arsenals, but Russia has said it is still abiding by the New START Treaty that was signed in Prague in 2010.

Scott Ritter, the former UN weapons inspector, told Glenn Diesen that the decision to let the treaty expire has an “earth-ending” significance, because without the treaty, or a replacement, the risk of a nuclear war increases “by an order of magnitude.”

“The reason why we were willing to do arms control with the Russians” was because they could “kick our ass. We could kick theirs, they can kick ours. too. We respected them; we feared them; and that respect, that combination between respect and fear, made arms control necessary.”
Washington had already pulled out of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty over allegations that Moscow was not being upfront about its stockpile.

Since the withdrawal, Washington has deployed such weapons in the Pacific and in Europe, which has angered China and Russia.

The Russians have said they would like to keep the treaty going, but President Donald Trump has resisted and has said he wants China to join the pact.

The Associated Press quoted U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who said Wednesday that the president has made clear that in order “to have true arms control

in the 21st century, it's impossible to do something that doesn't include China because of their vast and rapidly growing stockpile."

Putin announced in 2024 that Moscow adjusted its nuclear doctrine amid increased weapons support for Ukraine and discussions about allowing Kyiv to use Western-provided long-range missiles to hit targets deep inside Russia.

TRENDPOST: *John Mearsheimer, the University of Chicago professor, told Judge Andrew Napolitano last week that he was not too concerned about the treaty expiring because he said both the U.S. and Russia already have so many warheads that both countries could destroy the world many times over. He did mention that the big drawback was the lack of inspections, which would result in no deal.*

Mike Albertson, who was involved in implementing New START, told NBC News that the Cold War is "full of examples where each side had preconceptions and assumptions about what the other side was doing, some of which was faulty and which led to expensive competitions on who was seen to be ahead or behind."

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chairman of Russia's national security council, seemed to take a more pessimistic view about the treaty coming to an end, and posted on X an image of the Night King from "Game of Thrones," edited with the words: "Winter is coming."

"That's it," he posted. "For the first time since 1972, Russia (the former USSR) and the US have no treaty limiting strategic nuclear forces. SALT 1, SALT 2, START I, START II, SORT, New START – all in the past."

RUTTE SAYS NATO TROOPS WILL BE ‘INSTANTLY’ DEPLOYED TO UKRAINE ONCE THERE’S A PEACE DEAL

Mark Rutte, the head of NATO, said last week that troops from NATO will be deployed “instantly” to Ukraine if a peace deal is ever hashed out between Kyiv and Moscow, just as the war approaches its fourth anniversary.

The Trump administration has been trying to score a major diplomatic coup by bringing an end to the war, but has little to show for it. One of the key roadblocks in these discussions has been Russia’s demand that Ukraine cedes land not in its control.

Rutte visited Ukraine last week and addressed the country’s parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, and promised future support for the country. He imagined a post-war Ukraine and said that once a peace deal was signed, “there will instantly appear armed forces, planes in the sky, and maritime support from those in NATO who have agreed.”

Russia has identified NATO troops in Ukraine as one of the bright red lines that it would not permit. (See “PUTIN TO WEST: NATO TROOPS IN UKRAINE COULD LEAD TO NUCLEAR WAR” 5 Mar 2024, and “RUTTE WARNS THAT NATO MUST PREPARE FOR A LONG-TERM CONFRONTATION WITH RUSSIA” 11 Nov 2025.)

Maria Zakharova, Russia’s Foreign Ministry’s spokeswoman, told reporters on Thursday that NATO troops in Ukraine are “absolutely unacceptable for us.”

“Russia has repeatedly explained that the presence of Western troops on Ukrainian soil, under any flag, threatens our security,” she said, according to TASS. “We will treat these troops as legitimate military targets.”

She told reporters that “the uncontrolled expansion of NATO's geopolitical space to our borders, including Ukraine, has become one of the root causes of the conflict. Without eliminating this, a settlement is impossible.”

Rutte said Europe considers Ukraine as an essential part of its security and noted that it will be important to have security assurances in place once a peace deal is signed because the peace needs to “be lasting.”

“Not because papers have been signed, but because there is hard power to back it up,” he told the government.

He continued, “Ukraine has resisted. Ukraine has defended. Ukraine has stood strong. NATO stands with you in word and in deed.”

TREND FORECAST: *As founders of Occupy Peace and Freedom, while we opposed Russia’s decision to invade Ukraine, as we had detailed in our Spring edition of* ***The Trends Journal in 2014,*** *(it is now a weekly publication) we understood why Russian President Vladimir Putin made the decision to launch the military operation.*

We noted that the western media no longer reported on the U.S.-backed overthrow of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych in 2014. Elected in 2010 to succeed Viktor Yushchenko, who was championed by the U.S. when it ostensibly launched the Orange Revolution in 2004 that put him in power, Ukraine’s Central Election Commission and international observers declared that the 2010 presidential election was legitimate and fairly conducted.

With Yanukovych pushed out of office, the U.S. provided nearly $2 billion of taxpayer money to Ukraine in the name of foreign aid and military assistance.

We wrote that Putin did not want NATO forces and equipment stationed near its soft underbelly and he does not want Ukraine to field a military that can be a challenge in the region.

Russia demanded that Ukraine can never join NATO, and it must put caps on just how large its military can become. (See “PUTIN TELLS REPORTERS THAT RUSSIA WILL ACHIEVE ALL OF ITS GOALS IN UKRAINE” 23 Dec 2025, “ZELENSKY BULLSHITS, SAYS UKRAINE WON’T JOIN NATO ‘FOR NOW,’ WON’T GIVE UP LAND COUNTRY STILL CONTROLS,” 16 Dec 2025, “PUTIN SAYS RUSSIA DOES NOT WANT WAR WITH EUROPE, BUT SAYS SUCH A CONFLICT WOULD BE RESOLVED QUICKLY” 9 Dec 2025 and “EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BLAME RUSSIA FOR SABOTAGE—WITHOUT PROVIDING EVIDENCE” 9 Dec 2025.)

Europeans like Rutte have been doing their best to sell the war to the public by making the bullshit claim that Russia will not stop in Ukraine, and, should Kyiv fall, say goodbye to Western Europe, which is pure nonsense. (“DUTCH PM SELLS DOMINO THEORY WAR HYPE: RUSSIA WON’T STOP AT UKRAINE” 24 Jan 2023.)

Putin has said such claims are "laughable."

He called these European leaders "crooks" who are telling their "populations that Russia is going to attack and we have to strengthen our defense. Maybe they serve the military industrial complex or want to boost political ratings."

***TRENDPOST:** And, as always, the mainstream media avoids the details of the deal made between Mikhail Gorbachev and George Bush, Sr. in 1990 when the Soviet Union was breaking up that NATO would not move one inch further. As we noted back in the January 2022 edition of **The Trends Journal**, a month before the Ukraine War began:*

> *Long forgotten was the U.S. and NATO'S pledge not to expand into Eastern Europe following the deal made during the 1990 negotiations between the West and the Soviet Union over German unification.*
>
> *Therefore, in the view of Russia, it is taking self-defense actions to protect itself from NATO's eastward march.*
>
> *As detailed in the Los Angeles Times back in May of 2016, while the U.S. and NATO deny that no such agreement was struck, "…hundreds of memos, meeting minutes and transcripts from U.S. archives indicate otherwise." The article states:*
>
> > *"According to transcripts of meetings in Moscow on Feb. 9, then-Secretary of State James Baker suggested that in exchange for cooperation on Germany, U.S. could make 'iron-clad guarantees' that NATO would not expand 'one inch eastward.' Less than a week later, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to begin reunification talks. No formal deal was struck, but from all the evidence, the quid pro quo was clear: Gorbachev acceded to Germany's western alignment and the U.S. would limit NATO's expansion."*

CHINA HAWK WINS SNAP ELECTION IN JAPAN TO THE DELIGHT OF THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Sanae Takaichi, Japan's prime minister, won a snap election on Sunday, drawing praise from the Trump administration because of her hawkish approach to China.

Takaichi, 64, held a snap election and saw her Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition strengthen its grip on power in the country, winning 354 seats in Japan's lower house, which has 465 seats, *The Wall Street Journal* reported.

President Donald Trump posted on social media: "Sanae's bold and wise decision to call for an Election paid off big time."

Scott Bessent, the U.S. Treasury secretary, also congratulated Takaichi on social media and called her victory "historic."

"When Japan is strong, the U.S. is strong in Asia, and the Prime Minister's great relationship with President Trump demonstrates well the lasting bonds between our nations," he posted.

The New York Times reported that Takaichi plans to meet with Trump in March, and the top of her agenda is to try and convince the president to "maintain American military and economic commitments in Asia."

She responded to Trump's post congratulating her that the potential of Tokyo's alliance with the U.S. is "LIMITLESS."

In November, Takaichi, Japan's first female leader, angered Beijing when she imagined a Chinese blockade of Taiwan that could be considered a "survival-threatening situation" for her own country, which would mean that Japanese forces would intervene. (See "TENSIONS INCREASE BETWEEN BEIJING AND TOKYO AFTER SUGGESTION THAT JAPAN COULD COME TO TAIWAN'S AID IF ATTACKED" 25 Nov 2025.)

Takaichi tried to walk back her comments and claimed that former prime minister, Shinzo Abe, mentioned collective self-defense in 2015, according to the Asia Times. But the outlet reported that Abe never "brought up a possible attack on Taiwan as warranting a defense response by Japan."

The Times noted that China "loomed large" in the vote, and her tougher stance against China appealed to the younger voter.

"Japan should maintain a firm stance without making any compromises," Aoi Nakamura, 22, told the paper.

Lin Jian, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, issued a statement after her win and said Tokyo should "avoid repeating the mistakes of militarism."

"China's policy toward Japan remains clear and stable and will not change due to a single election in Japan," he said, according to *The Chosun Daily.* "Japan must retract Takaichi's erroneous remarks on Taiwan and demonstrate through action its sincerity in safeguarding the political foundation of Sino-Japanese relations."

The Trump administration has been in the process of compiling a "large arms sale of Patriot missiles" for Taiwan as part of the $11.1 billion arms package to Taipei, which has angered Beijing, the *Financial Times* reported.

The paper, citing three unnamed sources, said the sale could jeopardize Trump's upcoming visit to China in April. Trump spoke with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday and he reportedly told Trump that the U.S. should "handle the issue of arms sales to Taiwan with prudence."

Ryan Hass, a China expert at the Brookings Institution, told the paper, "China traditionally has sought to dissuade the US from taking actions it opposes, such as Taiwan arms sales, during the run-up to presidential meetings. This is not new, but the bluntness and public nature of the warning is noteworthy."

TREND FORECAST: *As with much of the world, Gen Z, the 14 to 29 year olds with a bleak future, voted for Ms. Takaichi because she was not a member of the ruling system and promised them a better economic future. On her anti-China stance, we forecast that Japan will not attack China if Beijing attacks Taiwan. If they did, the Chinese military, among the largest and most advanced in the world, will wipe Japan off the map.*

CAMERA SHY: ICE CRACKDOWN INCLUDES VIOLATION OF FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO FILM FEDERAL OFFICERS IN PUBLIC, CRITICS SAY

ICE agents who have been deployed to cities around the U.S. in the Trump administration's effort to round up illegal immigrants do not want to be filmed during their operations so they have cracked down on individuals who record them, which is a clear violation of the First Amendment, critics say.

Agents have tried to identify individuals who take their pictures and accuse them as "domestic terrorists" out to "doxx" federal law enforcement officers. They've also employed federal statutes that prevent the public from interfering with law enforcement.

The *Financial Times* reported last week that Pam Bondi, the attorney general, issued a memorandum to prosecutors months ago that said "organized doxxing of law enforcement" could be considered domestic terrorism, and there is a federal criminal

statute that criminalizes any effort to intimidate or interfere with these law enforcement officers carrying out their mission.

The paper cited a woman who was at a protest in Maine and was evidently filming ICE agents there. Video emerged of an ICE agent writing details about the woman, and she inquired why he was taking the information. The agent responded: “Because we have a nice little database. And now you’re considered a domestic terrorist.”

There seems to be good reason as to why the Trump administration would like to limit video footage from these operations. Cellphone video helped bring attention to the two recent killings by federal immigration officers in Minneapolis. The separate shootings resulted in the deaths of Renée Good and Alex Pretti, both 34. (See “TRUMP AND HIS ADMINISTRATION TRY TO LIMIT THE POLITICAL DAMAGE AFTER THE PRETTI SHOOTING” 3 Feb 2026, “TRUMP: PRETTI ‘CERTAINLY SHOULDN’T HAVE BEEN CARRYING A GUN’” 3 Feb 2026, and “‘FULL-ON CENSORSHIP’: TIKTOK USERS SAY PLATFORM SILENCED POSTS ABOUT LATEST ICE KILLING” 27 Jan 2025.)

Janet Napolitano, who served as the head of the Department of Homeland Security from 2009 to 2013, told the paper that Americans have “fundamental speech rights and we have the freedom to film and follow cars under our constitution.”

“Law enforcement agents should be trained in how to handle that and not respond with tear gas and pepper spray.”

The paper noted that a new video emerged last week of ICE operations in Santa Barbara, Calif., that also showed a heavy-handed response by these agents on those who appeared to be filming them. One individual could be seen being sprayed with some kind of chemical agent, and another was pushed, the paper said.

One witness told the paper that the officers pushed a woman “whose car was stuck in the street,” and her friend, a real estate agent, who tried to help her. The witness called it an “unnecessary aggression.”

“They’re unvetted, untrained, and aggressive,” the witness said. “They’re wearing military gear and carrying weapons as if they’re in Fallujah [Iraq], and they’re on the streets of America.”

TRENDPOST: *Judge Andrew Napolitano joined Gerald Celente last week on “Celente & the Judge,” and confirmed that the First Amendment is clear and you are allowed to photograph the government when in public.*

“That’s absolutely protected under the First Amendment,” he said. “That’s what Alex Pretti was doing when he was murdered with nine shots in the back. He had a cellphone with him, and he was attempting to photograph the people when he was assassinated.”

The ACLU also posted on its website that the First Amendment “protects your right to take photos and videos of law enforcement officers performing their duties in public. This applies to ICE agents, police, FBI, National Guard troops, and any other government officials.”

“If you're not under arrest, a law enforcement officer needs a warrant to confiscate your device or to view its contents without your consent,” the group said. “If you are arrested, an officer may take your phone but still needs a warrant to search its contents. The government may never delete your photographs or videos under any circumstances.”

Tricia McLaughlin, a spokeswoman from DHS, disagreed in a statement and said, “Videotaping ICE law enforcement and posting photos and videos of them online is doxing our agents.” She continued: “We will prosecute those who illegally harass ICE agents to the fullest extent of the law.”

NEW POLL: AMERICANS GROWING MORE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THEIR ECONOMIC FUTURE

A newly released *New York Times/Siena* poll found that there is a growing number of Americans who feel like it is becoming more difficult by the day to try and get by in the current economy and are growing more pessimistic about their future.

About 60 percent of those polled said they were concerned about affording basic items like groceries and gas. The paper said 11 percent of those polled said they can no longer afford these items.

The paper reported that two-thirds of Americans polled said they believe that a secure lifestyle in the middle class has become out of reach for the average person making a living.

The report noted that 77 percent said they believe it has been harder to achieve middle class status today than in the previous generation and many blame Trump, who ran in 2024 as the right man to fix the economy, for adding to their problems.

The paper said 51 percent of those polled said they blamed policies implemented by the current administration for their financial woes.

Trump and his administration have done their best to try to and blame the Biden administration for damaging the U.S. economy to an extent that it is not easily fixable. (See "PRESIDENT TRUMP'S 'MISSION ACCOMPLISHED' MOMENT" 16 Dec 2025.)

The paper said 31 percent of those polled blamed Trump as being "responsible for the biggest challenges" they face economically, while 35 percent blamed the previous White House.

The report noted that the feeling of economic gloom was not exclusive to those in the lower salary brackets. The paper said about 10 percent of voters who pull in more than $200,000 a year said they do not believe that they will be able to retire.

The paper noted that older Americans are far more secure in their finances than younger voters. The report said nearly 60 percent of voters over 65 said they consider themselves "holding steady." The paper also noted that 40 percent of those who are under 30 – Gen Z voters – said they believe that they are losing ground in the current climate.

TRENDPOST: *It is worth noting that a large part of achieving the American Dream is home ownership, and many young people feel that housing prices have essentially eliminated them from the market. Indeed, not too long ago the average age of first time homebuyers was 28 years of age... now it is 40 year olds.*

The paper said 70 percent of voters over the age of 65 said they are currently living inside the home that "they'd like to own," while more than 50 percent of those under 30 believe that they will not be able to afford a home.

The poll found that just 14 percent of all voters believe that they are getting ahead in their finances, which the paper said included those who earn more than $200,000 a year.

***The Trends Journal** has identified GEN Z REVOLUTION as a Top Trend for 2026 because young people feel like they have no future and the trend is likely to only grow because Trump has prioritized his rich friends over the average American voter. (See "ONE BIG CLUB: TRUMP'S SON SIGNS PROPERTY DEAL IN QATAR BEFORE DADDY'S VISIT" 6 May 2025.)*

TRUMP MAKING BRAIN-DEAD BIDEN LOOK GOOD?

A newly released poll found that a majority of Americans – by a small margin – say they believe former President Joe Biden ran the country better than his successor, Donald Trump.

Harvard University and The Harris Poll released a survey from January on Monday that found 51 percent of American voters believed that Biden did a better job than Trump, according to *The Hill.* The report noted that 49 percent said they believe Trump was doing a better job than the previous president.

The report noted that the new result was a sharp decline from February 2025, when 58 percent of respondents said they believed Trump was handling the job better than Biden.

The survey found that Trump is still struggling to sell the claim to Americans that the economy has improved during his time in office. In December, 50 percent of voters told the poll that they agreed that Trump has helped improve the economy; today, 60 percent of those polled said they believe the economy is worse under Trump.

Trump has tried to pin the blame on the Biden White House.

“I inherited the worst inflation in the history of our country,” he said in an interview with NBC News. “It was through the roof. Now, you will say it wasn’t in history, it was 48 years. You know there’s a theory. There was… I say it was the worst. But whether it’s 48 years or what, I inherited the worst inflation in the history of our country.”

CNN noted that Trump is not being factual when he makes that claim, and noted that inflation in December 2024, a month before he took office, came in at 2.9 percent. (The report noted that inflation hit 9.1 percent in June 2022, and that the all-time high was 23.7 percent, which dates all the way back to 1920.)

ADP, the payroll processing firm, said the U.S. labor market struggled along in January, as private companies added just 22,000 open positions in the month. CNBC said the number was “below, even muted expectations,” and would’ve been negative if not for 74,000 hires in “the education health services category.”

“Hiring is softening. It continues a pattern that we’ve noticed for the past three years,” Nela Richardson, ADP’s chief economist, told the network. “Employers are very reticent to hire in the current economy.”

NPR/PBS/Marist also released a new poll on Thursday that found just 36 percent of voters approve of the way Trump has handled the economy, compared to 59 percent who say they disapprove, which marks his highest disapproval since he took office in 2017 for his first term, *The Hill* reported.

The economy continues to be a priority for voters, and six out of 10 independents say they believe that the administration’s number one concern should be bringing down prices.

The Kiel Institute for the World Economy noted that Trump’s tariffs, which he imposed on trade partners, ended up costing Americans. The report said the U.S. population “bore 96 percent” of the costs that were tied to the tariffs back in 2025.

The poll found that just 26 percent of Americans approve of Trump’s job performance.

Lee Miringoff, director of the Marist Institute for Public Opinion, told *The Daily Beast* that the president’s own supporters from 2024 are jumping ship, in particular, Latinos and young people. Politico noted that Republicans are “freaking out” after Taylor Rehmet, a Democrat, won in a seat in the state Senate in a district where Trump won by 17 points in 2024. Rehmet won by 14 points.

Rep. Tony Gonzales, R-Texas, told the outlet that the election should "be an eye-opener to all of us that we all need to pick up the pace."

TREND FORECAST: *James Carville famously said back in 1992, "It's the economy, stupid," because at the end of the day, voters want to be able to feel like they're getting ahead financially and can support themselves and their families.*

We have reported extensively on how Trump seems to have forgotten the average American during his effort to enrich his family, friends, and donors. (See "TRUMP CHANGE: INAUGURAL DONORS BEGIN TO RECEIVE DIVIDENDS FROM INVESTMENT" 10 Jun 2025, "AMERICAN FASCISM: TRUMP RAISES $239M FOR INAUGURATION AS BUSINESSES, DONORS TRY TO BUY GOODWILL" 29 Apr 2025, "ROBBER BARONS 2.0: BILLIONAIRES LINE UP BEHIND TRUMP DURING INAUGURATION" 28 Jan 2025, "ROBBER BARONS 2.0: THE RICH PAY THEIR WAY INTO TRUMP'S INAUGURATION" 21 Jan 2025 and "TRUMP'S TEAM: THE BILLIONAIRES CLUB" 14 Jan 2025.)

Gerald Celente has long said: "When all else fails, they take you to war," and it is failing in the U.S.

BESSENT TAKES CREDIT FOR BREAKING IRAN

Scott Bessent, the U.S. Treasury secretary, claimed credit last week for helping to crash the Iranian economy to foment the deadly protests that swept across the country earlier this year, which the White House tried to use as a *casus belli* to trigger a war.

Bessent told the Senate Banking Committee that his department helped create a dollar shortage in Iran that came into a "grand culmination in December, when one of the largest banks" in the country failed.

JNS reported that Ayandeh Bank failed in October after losing $5 billion in loans that went sour.

He said the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran was forced to print Iranian rials to prevent an economic collapse and so it could keep paying its foreign debt and imports, which sent the rial's value plummeting.

Bessent said Iran's "inflation exploded, and hence we have seen the Iranian currency" go into a freefall.

"We have seen the Iranian leadership wiring money out of the country like crazy," Bessent said, according to JNS. "The rats are leaving the ship, and that is a good sign that they know the end may be near."

Bessent told the New York Economic Club in March 2025 that the administration's goal is "Making Iran Broke Again."

"If economic security is national security, the regime in Tehran will have neither," he said at the time, according to Middle East Eye.

The report noted that the U.S. has had sanctions on Iran for about 50 years, and President Donald Trump escalated the effort, calling it a "maximum pressure" campaign against the country.

Bessent made a similar comment about purposely tanking the Iranian economy to spark protests in Davos last month.

"This is economic statecraft, no shots fired," Bessent said.

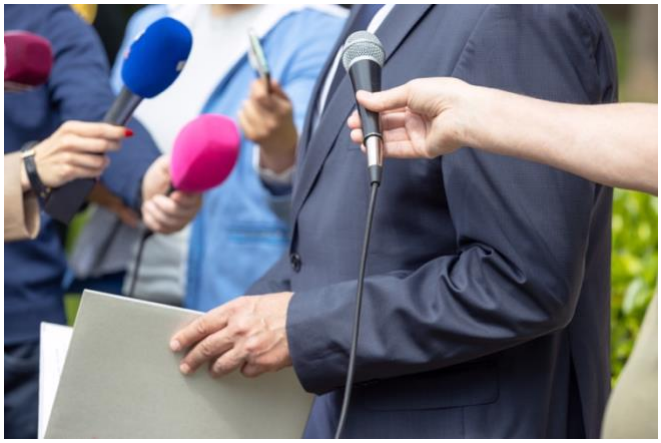
TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal *has reported extensively on how the Trump administration will do all that it can to topple the Iranian government for Israel. (See "TRUMP HAD SAID IRAN'S NUCLEAR FACILITIES WERE 'OBLITERATED' AND NOW HE WANTS TO OBLITERATE THE OBLITERATED" 3 Feb 2026, "TRUMP WARNS IRAN THAT U.S. WOULD BLOW UP COUNTRY IF HE'S ASSASSINATED" 27 Jan 2026, "TRUMP: 'IT'S TIME TO LOOK FOR NEW LEADERSHIP IN IRAN'" 20 Jan 2026, "TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES NEW SANCTIONS IN 'MAXIMUM PRESSURE' CAMPAIGN AGAINST IRAN" 20 May 2025 and "U.S. IMPOSES NEW SANCTIONS ON IRAN AMID NUKE TALKS" 29 Apr 2025.)*

Jeffrey Sachs, the Columbia economist, said in an interview on Tuesday that the Jeffrey Epstein files seem to be shedding new light on just how the Zionist lobby maintains such a stranglehold on U.S. politics.

*"I think what we're beginning to see the pieces put together with the Epstein file, because what we're seeing from the Epstein file is not even so much about the sex and the parties on the island, but of Epstein's network of influence across the Israeli government, across the U.S. government, and the British government on all sorts of issues, including the security issues. So, there's something going on that's being exposed because all of us have wondered: How does the Zionist lobby have such a hold on U.S. politics?" he told Judge Andrew Napolitano's Judging Freedom. (See "MILLIONS OF ITEMS FROM EPSTEIN FILES RELEASED, MILLIONS LEFT UNRELEASED. WHO'S FU*KING WHO IS REDACTED" 3 Feb 2026.)*

Bessent showed that the U.S. gets to pick countries that succeed and countries that fail. It isn't ancient history that the U.S. bailed out Argentina with $40 billion to save its currency. (See "AMERICA FIRST? TRUMP SAVES MILEI WITH U.S.-TAXPAYER BAILOUT" 30 Sep 2025.)

PENTAGON DIGS IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST JOURNALIST ACCESS



The Pentagon last week responded to a lawsuit filed by *The New York Times* pertaining to its new restrictions in place on reporters who cover the military from inside the building and insisted that the measures are intended to safeguard key national security information.

Last September, reporters at the Pentagon were told that they must abide by the Trump administration's rules or they would not be able to report from inside the facility, prompting dozens of news outlets to pack up their bags and leave their offices in the building.

The rules called for all reporters to be guided by an escort once they entered the building. If they needed to leave their offices, they would need an escort for most of the building, and they could not report on items that were not authorized for public release, including unclassified information.

Journalists saw this measure as meaning that the first round of editing would be decided by the department that they were reporting on.

Mike Balsamo, the head of the National Press Club, issued a statement: “This is a direct assault on independent journalism at the very place where independent scrutiny matters most: the U.S. military.”

The Society of Professional Journalists issued a statement that said the policy “reeks of prior restraint – the most egregious violation of press freedom under the First Amendment – and is a dangerous step toward government censorship.”

Reporters were told to sign a 21-page form that *The Times* said restricted essentially every part of story gathering.

The paper filed a complaint against the department in response to the new guidelines and accused the Pentagon of infringing on the First Amendment rights of these reporters. The paper also said the restriction is a violation of the Fifth Amendment, which covers due process.

The lawsuit states: “The policy, in violation of the First Amendment, seeks to restrict journalists’ ability to do what journalists have always done—ask questions of government employees and gather information to report stories that take the public beyond official pronouncements. If and when they do and then publish anything that has not been approved by Pentagon officials, the policy permits those officials to, at any time and without any standards to guide their decisions, immediately suspend and ultimately revoke those journalists’ PFACs in violation of the First Amendment, the Due Process Clause, and binding D.C. Circuit precedent.” (PFACs are the Pentagon building passes.)

The paper noted how major news outlets refused to sign the Pentagon’s ‘Acknowledgement’ of the new guidelines and were summarily replaced by MAGA-friendly outlets, like Mike Lindell, the chief executive of MyPillow.

TRENDPOST: *Trump is uncomfortable whenever he is around anyone who is not a complete sycophant, which is why he has surrounded himself with a Yes-Man administration that understands that all unfavorable stories must be treated as “fake news” and denied to the end. (See “ATTACK, ATTACK, ATTACK: TRUMP TEAM TRIES ITS BEST TO GO ON THE OFFENSIVE AMID SIGNAL CHAT FALLOUT” 1 Apr 2025.)*

Hegseth should be well-versed on what a loyal journalist looks like, given that he was an anchor on Fox News, thus paid to put out for any Republican administration in power.

CONGRESS LAUNCHES PROBE INTO TRUMP FAMILY'S WORLD LIBERTY FINANCIAL

Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., the top Democrat on the House Committee on Competition, announced last week that he launched a probe into the Trump family's crypto company World Liberty Financial (WLFI) that took a $500 million investment from a royal in Abu Dhabi that raised questions if the deal had anything to do with the major U.S. chip sale to the UAE that raised national security concerns.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the deal took place on 16 January 2025 and involved a group that has ties to Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a senior security official in the country. The deal included a 49 percent stake in the company.

Khanna wrote that these arrangements "are not just a scandal, but may even represent a violation of multiple laws and the United States Constitution."

"Our ability to successfully outcompete the Chinese Communist Party depends on the integrity of our policymaking process," he said, according to the paper.

Politico noted that Democrats have already voiced their objections over the Trump family's business dealings during the second term, but there is a sense that the WLFI funding could give them a "rare point of leverage" to pursue these concerns.

"The Trump administration has demonstrated the grossest, most egregious corruption from the White House we have ever seen," Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., told the outlet.

WLFI called the paper's report a "baseless assault."

The New York Times reported in May that Tahnoon controls the $1.5 trillion Emiratis' sovereign wealth fund and, weeks before the AI chip deal the sheikh met with Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy and father of Zach Witkoff, a founder at the company. The paper reported that under the chip deal, billions of dollars' worth of advanced chips would be sold to Tahnoon's G42, a technology firm, which seems to brush aside lingering concerns about the risks of these chips falling into the hands of the Chinese.

The paper noted that the company has a "wide range" of business partnerships with companies in China.

Khanna wrote in a letter on Wednesday that export controls are notoriously complicated, and "reasonable minds can disagree on the best way to implement and administer them."

He continued, "But whatever one's views on how we should engage with the UAE on AI in order to win the strategic competition with the Chinese Communist Party, seemingly subordinating robust policy discussions to the President's personal financial interests is unacceptable."

Khanna also raised questions about a separate agreement that let to MGX, a firm led by Tahnoon, would deploy WLFI's USD1 stablecoin to wrap up a $2 billion investment into Binance, the cryptocurrency platform. CoinDesk noted that President Donald Trump pardoned Changpeng Zhao, the founder of Binance last October after pleading guilty to violating the Bank Secrecy Act.

Khanna said in his letter, "In their totality, these transactions, investments, and pardons do not just bear the appearance of impropriety, but of illegality."

***TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal** has reported extensively on Trump's new-found love for all things crypto – despite once being an outspoken critic of bitcoin and the entire industry. (See "UNUSUAL COINCIDENCE: HEAD OF UAE'S SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUND DEPOSITS $2B IN TRUMP'S SONS' WORLD LIBERTY FINANCIAL JUST BEFORE U.S. ALLOWS EMIRATES TO BUY MOST ADVANCED COMPUTER CHIPS" 23 Sep 2025, "TRUMP'S SONS TALK AT BITCOIN CONFERENCE, TAKE AIM AT TRADITIONAL BANKS" 3 Jun 2025, "ETHICAL CONCERNS MOUNT OVER TRUMP'S CRYPTO VENTURE" 11 Mar 2025, "TRUMP NAMES CRYPTOCURRENCIES FOR STRATEGIC RESERVE, SPARKING RALLY" 4 Mar 2025, and "NICE WORK IF YOU CAN GET IT: TRUMP EARNS $57M FROM WORLD LIBERTY FINANCIAL TOKEN SALES" 17 Jun 2025.)*

Trump pulled in more than $57 million in token sales tied to his family's venture into World Liberty Financial, which was launched just before his election win, according to financial disclosures obtained by The Wall Street Journal in June.

TRUMP NOW WANTS HARVARD TO PAY $1 BILLION OVER HANDLING OF 'ANTISEMITISM' PROTESTS

President Donald Trump took to Truth Social last week to up the ante in his standoff with Harvard and said the Ivy League school must now pay $1 billion to the federal government over its unacceptable tolerance of antisemitism on campus during the spring of 2024.

Trump called Harvard "strongly antisemitic" and blamed the school for feeding fake news stories to *The New York Times* about the situation. The Associated Press noted that Trump's post on Monday night followed the publication of an article in the paper that said the White House was no longer forcing the school to earmark $500 million to create trade schools.

"This case will continue until justice is served," Trump posted. "We are now seeking One Billion Dollars in damages, and want nothing further to do, into the future, with Harvard University."

The Times noted that the school and the Trump administration have been squaring off over the administration's nationwide crackdown on any protest tied to the genocide in Gaza.

The report noted that other schools that have clashed with the administration chose to settle, including Columbia, which agreed to pay $221 million to settle the administration's investigations. Brown agreed to pay $50 million in grants over a five-year period and Cornell agreed to pay $60 million.

Trump has tried to pressure Harvard into capitulation by ending about $2 billion in research grants and federal funding, which was reversed by a federal judge.

The AP noted that Harvard, arguably the most prestigious school in the U.S., has been a favorite target of the administration because of the campaign “to bring the nation’s most prestigious universities to heel.”

But *The Wall Street Journal* noted that Harvard is on a winning streak, and President Alan Garber is being recognized for his determination to stand up to Trump. The paper said the school’s endowment has grown, and there’s a feeling it will be able to wait out these investigations.

Ted Mitchell, the head of the American Council on Education, told the paper, “I’m betting on Harvard. The assault is already being compromised at almost every turn, and I think at the end the administration will understand that the juice isn’t worth the squeeze.”

***TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal** has reported extensively on how the Trump administration has committed itself to crushing any criticism of Israel on college campuses by labeling anti-genocide protests as “antisemitic.” (See “FEDERAL JUDGE BLOCKS TRUMP’S ATTEMPT TO STOP HARVARD’S ENROLLMENT OF FOREIGN STUDENTS” 27 May 2025, “TRUMP ADMINISTRATION CUTS ANOTHER $450M IN GRANTS FROM HARVARD AS PUNISHMENT FOR NOT BENDING ITS KNEE” 20 May 2025, “TRUMP CALLS HARVARD A THREAT TO ‘DEMOCRACY’ AFTER UNIVERSITY REFUSES TO BOW KNEE TO HIS ADMINISTRATION” 29 Apr 2025, “ANOTHER COLUMBIA PROTESTER ARRESTED, STUDENT’S VISA REVOKED AMID TRUMP ADMINISTRATION CRACKDOWN ON ‘ANTISEMITISM’” 18 Mar 2025, “UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA FALLS INTO LINE DURING TRUMP’S HUNT FOR ANTISEMITISM” 18 Mar 2025 and “DOJ UNLEASHES ANTISEMITISM HUNTERS TO FOUR MAJOR CITIES” 18 Mar 2025.)*

Trump understands that when you cannot win a debate, it is important to ban the discussion.

The ongoing genocide in Gaza is unfolding right in front of everyone’s eyes, and the world is doing nothing to stop it.

BILLIONAIRE GRIFFIN CALLS OUT TRUMP'S GRIFT

Ken Griffin, the billionaire founder of Citadel, offered rare criticism of President Donald Trump from a business leader last week when he raised questions about the Trump family's business dealings and its pay-to-play tactics.

Griffin, whose net worth is about $51 billion, told a conference in West Palm Beach last week that it comes off as "distasteful" when the U.S government starts to engage in "corporate America in a way that tastes of favoritism."

He told the paper, "Most CEOs just don't want to find themselves in the business of having to, in some sense, suck up to one administration after another to succeed in running their business."

Griffin said he was uncomfortable with the Trump administration making investments in companies listed in the private sector, usually claiming that the move was due to national security interests.

The New York Times reported that the federal government under Trump committed more than $10 billion in funds for a minority stake in up to 11 companies, including an $8.9 billion deal with Intel, in return for a 9.9 percent stake in the company. The federal government also paid $400 million for a 7.5-15 percent stake in MP Materials, a rare earths company.

Griffin spoke at an event organized by *The Wall Street Journal*, and the paper identified him as a Republican "megadonor." His criticism was not limited to the federal government's shift into the private sector. He also raised an alarm about how the Trump family has enriched itself during the second term.

"This administration has definitely made missteps in choosing decisions or courses that have been very, very enriching to the families of those in the administration," he said, according to the *Financial Times.*

He continued, "One of the things that you want to believe is that those who serve the public interest have the public interest at heart in everything they do."

The White House told the paper that Trump is governing with only “the best interest of the American people” in mind.

“The fact that major stock indexes have hit multiple all-time highs, real wages have grown, and inflation has cooled since President Trump took office is proof that this administration is delivering for every American,” a White House spokesperson said.

The paper noted that Trump and his family have done a killing since he took office, mainly in the cryptocurrency space, having pulled in more than $1 billion in 2025.

Trump’s children, along with Steve Witkoff’s adult son, created World Liberty Financial, which launched USD1 stablecoin. The U.S. House of Representatives announced that it is looking into a report in *The Wall Street Journal* that said Emirati Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan agreed to buy 49 percent of the company for $500 billion, which included “steering $187 million to Trump family entities.”

The sheikh had been keen on getting access to the U.S.’s most advanced computer chips, but was stymied by the Biden administration over fears that the technology would end up in China’s hands.

Five months later, Trump approved the sale.

Griffin told the conference that other CEOs feel the same way that he does but are too worried about retribution from the White House to speak up about their concerns. Griffin said he can understand their fears in the age of social media.

“The power of social media to persuade millions or tens of millions of consumers to make a product choice is really terrifying to corporate executives, and I think it’s put them in a very, just, intrinsically withdrawn position,” he said.

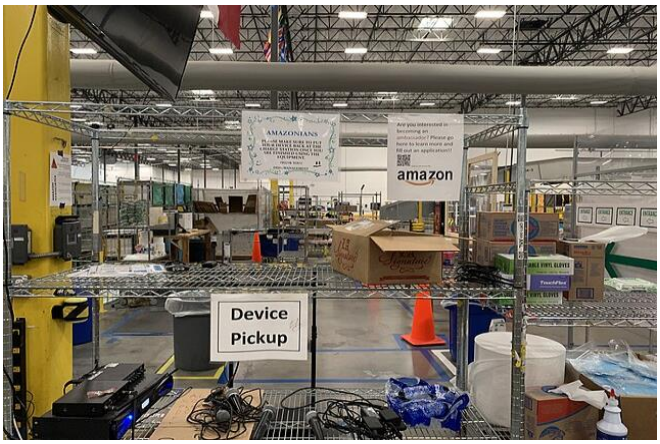
TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal *has reported extensively on how Trump is using his second term to enrich himself, his family, his friends, and his donors. (See “TRUMP CHANGE: INAUGURAL DONORS BEGIN TO RECEIVE DIVIDENDS FROM INVESTMENT” 10 Jun 2025, “TRUMP’S PRIVATE CLUBS SEE BIG PROFITS AS THEY BECOME FAVORED VENUE FOR DONORS, ‘FAVOR SEEKERS’: REPORT” 27 May 2025, “AMERICAN FASCISM: TRUMP RAISES $239M FOR INAUGURATION AS BUSINESSES, DONORS TRY TO BUY GOODWILL” 29 Apr 2025, “TRUMP SUES IRS FOR $10 BILLION OVER TAX FILE LEAK” 3 Feb 2026, and “TRUMP’S*

MEMECOIN LOSES STEAM, OPENS PRESIDENT UP TO NEW SCRUTINY" 27 Jan 2026.)

Gerald Celente has long said that Trump will work to make sure his Bankster Bandit, cryptocurrency friends, and tech donors will be paid back in full for their obedience and bribes.

"The merger of state and corporate powers—what was this guy's name? [Benito] Mussolini? … Yeah, fascism," Celente said. "That's what he called it by definition."

AMAZON SEES TAX BILL FALL AFTER TRUMP'S CUTS



President Donald Trump's tax cuts helped Jeff Bezos's Amazon save billions of dollars in 2025 compared to the year before, despite the company seeing a 45 percent jump in profits, according to a report.

Politico reported that the Seattle-based company paid $1.2 billion in 2025, a sharp decline from the $9 billion it paid to Uncle Sam in the previous year. The report said the company could thank Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill that allows companies to write off some capital investments immediately, rather than carry them over a period of years.

The Wall Street Journal, citing economists, reported that these "upfront deductions are the pieces of the tax law that will have the greatest bang for the buck because they accelerate investment."

The paper noted that Amazon finds itself in the middle of the Magnificent 7's rush to invest in AI and data infrastructure. So, under the terms of the tax policy, once Amazon purchases, say, a new data center, it can begin writing off deductions tied to equipment right away. (Previously, these tech companies had to write up deductions tied to research over a period of years, the paper said.)

“Due to Amazon’s unprecedented U.S. investments, our tax bill this year reflects those changes,” the company said in a statement obtained by the paper. The company said it invested about $340 billion back into the U.S. in 2025.

The company continued, “Deducting our costs more quickly provides a short-run benefit, but this policy ultimately doesn’t change the amount of tax we pay. It just changes the timing of our tax payments.”

The *WSJ* said other tech giants have also taken advantage of the new law, including Alphabet, the parent of Google, which also saw its tax bill fall nearly 37 percent compared to 2024, despite seeing its domestic profit increase by about 33 percent.

Common Dreams noted that Amazon’s tax filing occurred days after the company announced that it cut 16,000 corporate jobs in what is believed to be an effort to “replace workers with robots and artificial intelligence models in the coming years.”

The Roosevelt Institute think tank said in a statement that Trump’s One Big Beautiful Bill cut Medicaid and ObamaCare, and is “exacerbating our medical debt crisis.”

“Congress made a choice: cut assistance for the most vulnerable to double down on a tax code already favoring dominant firms,” the think tank said, according to *Common Dreams.*

***TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal** has reported how Trump’s White House has helped the Bigs get Much Bigger, while We the People of Slavelandia struggle to get by, often resorting to side “hustles” to supplement income. (Bankrate noted in July that over 25 percent of adults in the U.S. have a side gig.) (See “RICH GETTING RICHER: GLOBAL INEQUALITY HITS ‘EXTREME’ LEVELS AS TOP 0.001 PERCENT HOLD THREE TIMES THE WEALTH AS TO POOREST HALF OF THE WORLD” 16 Dec 2025, “SPOTLIGHT: BIGS GETTING BIGGER” 27 Jan 2026, and “OXFAM: BILLIONAIRE WEALTH REACHES HIGHEST PEAK EVER IN 2025, AS FORTUNES INCREASE BY OVER 16 PERCENT IN 2025” 27 Jan 2026.)*

Team Trump has been good to Bezos and other billionaires.

Pete Hegseth, the Fox News clown playing the role of Trump’s secretary of war, visited with Bezos in Florida last week after the Pentagon awarded his Blue Origin with contracts, USA Today reported.

"No more business as usual, which I know, Mr. Bezos, is music to your ears," Hegseth said, according to the paper.

The report noted that Blue Origin has won billions of dollars in contracts to build a nuclear-powered spacecraft and other communication tech.

***The Trends Journal** called it.*

In August, we reported that Trump's Big Beautiful Bill would mean more riches for the rich, and more pain for We the People of Slavelandia. (See "TRUMP'S 'BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL' MEANS MORE RICHES FOR THE WEALTHY, PEANUTS FOR WE THE PEOPLE OF SLAVELANDIA" 19 Aug 2025.)

We have noted in previous issues that we forecast that there will be growing political movements against the 1 percent when the coming "Greatest Depression" sinks the American economy… while politicians raise federal, state, and city taxes on consumer goods and services, school and property, etc. (See our TOP TRENDS FOR 2026: GEN Z REVOLUTION, and OFF WITH THEIR HEADS 2.0.)

WHILE DADDIES PLAY GOVERNMENT, SONS PLAY CRYPTO BUSINESS TYCOONS

President Donald Trump and his family have made a new fortune in the crypto game and he is bringing Steve Witkoff's adult son along for the ride, according to a report last week in *The Wall Street Journal* that went into great detail on how World Liberty Financial has been the key money-maker, and is generating "cash far faster than the president's decades-old real-estate business."

World Liberty Financial issued a stablecoin that tracks the U.S. dollar called USD1 that it says is beneficial to individuals looking to quickly send money without regulations – in particular with foreign deals. The company has come under scrutiny after the paper reported that Tahnoon bin Zayed al Nahyan, the billionaire sheik from the UAE, bought a 49 percent stake in the company for $500

million. (MGX, a Tahnoon-backed company, also purchased of $2 billion in stablecoins from World Liberty Financial.)

The Wall Street Journal noted that the sheik's company's purchase will result in the company making "tens of millions of dollars" in profits each year from transaction fees.

The paper noted that Zach Witkoff, 32, is the head of the firm, and Trump's boys all play important roles. The paper reported that the company has resulted in a $1.4 billion windfall for "both families" since Trump won the presidency for the second time. (The paper said the Trump family made "at least $1.2 billion in cash since the company's launch.)

The paper said the company's success has made Zach Witkoff and Trump's boys, who "were all neophytes" just years ago, into "wealthy financial celebrities in their own right."

The White House and companies tied to these children have all denied any conflicts of interest and insisted that children of elected officials are still allowed to hold jobs. Trump is listed as "founder emeritus" on the company's website.

Susie Wiles, the White House chief of staff, told *The Atlantic in* May that Trump "has many, many, many acquaintances, far too many to even name or count."

"But I think he would say he has very few true friends outside of his family, and Steve has to be first among equals there," she said.

TRENDPOST: *We have reported extensively on how Trump's second term has been one big money-grab by the Trumpsters, and they're not even hiding it. (See "TRUMP'S FAMILY LOOKS TO EXPAND CRYPTO EMPIRE INTO BANKING" 13 Jan 2026, "PwC HEAD SAYS COMPANY IS BULLISH ON CRYPTO NOW THAT TRUMP CLUB IS PLAYING THE GAME" 13 Jan 2026, and "TRUMP ADMINISTRATION GIVES NEW BOOST TO CRYPTO WITH BANK APPROVAL" 16 Dec 2025.)*

As of now, given the extreme equity market and precious metals uncertainty, where crypto's go, nobody really knows.

TRUMP'S POLITICAL GANG RAISES $429M BEFORE MIDTERMS

President Donald Trump may be sinking in the polls, but he continues to benefit from having a massive funding stockpile that could help influence this year's Midterm Elections.

The *Financial Times* reported that "allies" of the president have managed to raise $429 million, including $304 million held by Maga Inc, a political action committee, that has no limit on how much it can raise or employ during elections – as long as it does not work "directly with campaigns."

Alex Conant, a Republican strategist, told the paper that these Super Pacs have a lot "of money to potentially spend on a handful of competitive Senate and House races."

The report noted that one of the early targets of the funding has been Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ken., who has been a vocal critic of Trump's unlimited support of Israel and the release of the Epstein Files.

Lexington's *Herald-Leader* reported that millions are being funneled into the race between Massie and Ed Gallrein, the Trump-preferred candidate, and most of the money has flowed in from other states.

"Massie has a base that's out there across the country. The same can be said for the president and, by proxy, Ed Gallrein. Where there's a national following, national money will follow," Jake Cox, a Republican strategist from the state, told the paper.

Massie has said Gallrein is hoping "woke billionaires, liberal lawyers, and foreign special interests will buy him a seat in Congress but Kentucky voters won't fall for it."

The *FT*'s report said Maga Inc. has benefited from eight-figure donations from major players in cryptocurrencies and AI technology, including one donation from Crypto.com for $30 million. The report noted that the company has good reason to support Trump. SFGate also reported that Greg Brockman, a co-founder of OpenAI, also gave the super Pac $25 million.

His Securities and Exchange Commission ended an investigation into the company that began under the Biden administration and his family has made deals with the company during its foray into cryptocurrencies. (The company rejected any indication that the donation had anything to do with the probe.)

NBC News reported that the Democrats' House Majority PAC, pulled in more than $48 million and closed 2025 with $46 million in cash to spend.

TRENDPOST: *Conant, the Republican strategist, told the paper that Trump continues to be the only Republican who can get voters excited. Despite his lagging poll numbers, The Economist noted last week that "Trump's voters still overwhelmingly approve of his performance as president." However, as we have noted, he is losing support among the Gen Z demographic. (See "GEN Z REVOLUTION: TRUMP QUICKLY LOSING SUPPORT FROM YOUNG VOTERS" 3 Feb 2026.)*

The Trends Journal *has identified GEN Z REVOLUTION as a Top Trend for 2026 because young people around the world feel as though they have no future. (See "GEN Z REVOLUTION: STUDENTS PROTEST IN SERBIA OVER GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION" 20 Jan 2026, "AS FORECAST: GEN Z PROTEST WIDENS, MEXICO THE LATEST COUNTRY ENSNARED" (18 Nov 2025), and "GEN Z REVOLUTION: NEARLY A MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRITAIN ARE NOT EMPLOYED OR IN JOB TRAINING" 13 Jan 2026.)*

And as we have long noted, it is not a government, it is a crime syndicate owned by the billionaires and multi-millionaires who pay for politicians to run for office. (See "BEZOS'S WASHINGTON POST: BILLIONAIRES ARE SPENDING MORE THAN EVER ON ELECTIONS" 25 Nov 2025.)

YOUNG PEOPLE SEE 60 PERCENT JUMP IN PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS IN LAST 30 YEARS, STUDY SAYS

A newly published study found that there has been a noticeable increase in people aged 14 to 20 who have been diagnosed with severe mental illness characterized by psychosis compared to previous decades.

The study was published Monday in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal,* and found that there has been a 60 percent increase in these cases over the last 30 years, according to *The New York Times.*

“I was expecting to see some increases in these younger folks, but I was quite surprised by the scale,” Dr. Daniel Myran, one of the study’s authors who is the research chair at Toronto’s North York General Hospital, told the paper.

The researchers studied the medical records of 12 million people who were born in Ontario from 1960 to 2009. During that time, 152,587 had been diagnosed with some

form of psychiatric disorder. Researchers found that the prevalence of young people – those between 14 and 20 – saw a 60 percent increase in these cases during the time period, jumping from 62.5 instances out of 100,000 in 1997 to 99.7 cases per 100,000 in 2023.

“Individuals born in 2000 to 2004 were estimated to have a 70 percent greater rate of new diagnoses of psychotic disorders compared with those born in 1975 to 1979,” the study found, according to News-Medical.net.

Increases in psychosis over time were consistent for both males and females, though males remained at higher risk over the study period, the researchers said in a statement.

TRENDPOST: *Researchers said that they are not sure why there has been such a jump in new cases, and Myran said one of the leading possibilities is the growing popularity of cannabis and other drugs taken earlier in life. The Times noted that in 2024, about 41 percent of Canadians aged 16 to 19 said they used cannabis at least once in the previous year.*

“The interesting question is, how much of psychosis is caused by a modifiable substance use? Are these edge scenarios, where it’s pretty rare? Or is it actually quite frequent?” Myran told the paper.

Samuel T. Wilkinson, a resident physician in the Department of Psychiatry at The Yale School of Medicine, wrote in The Wall Street Journal in 2013: “Marijuana may push everyone a few feet closer to that cliff. For those who were already close to the cliff, the drug pushes them over the edge into the chasm of insanity, hence precipitating the development of schizophrenia.”

These articles did not mention the impact that COVID-19 lockdowns and “Technitis” have had on the young population. (See “LONELY, DEPRESSED TEENS ARE FALLING IN LOVE WITH AI CHATBOTS, REPORT SAYS” 18 Feb 2025, “DRINKING DEATHS SURGE AFTER COVID LOCKDOWNS” 21 Jan 2025, “U.S. GOVERNMENT HIRED PR FIRM TO PUSH COVID SHOTS FOR KIDS” 26 Nov 2024, and “EXCESSIVE PHONE USE IN CHILDHOOD CAN LEAD TO DEPRESSION, IRRITABILITY IN TEEN YEARS: STUDY” 1 Apr 2025.)

The researchers said if the rate continues to increase and more people are diagnosed at younger ages, countries will have to figure out how to properly care for these

individuals. The report noted that the study focused on individuals from Ontario, so more needs to be determined if the trend is occurring elsewhere.

DEATH OF JOURNALISM: BILLIONAIRE BEZOS GUTS WASHINGTON POST'S NEWSROOM

The Washington Post, one of the U.S.'s top papers, fired roughly 300 of its reporting staff to try to get a grip on its expenses as the paper experienced a drop in advertising revenue, which prompted criticism of Jeff Bezos, the billionaire owner of the newspaper, for ignoring calls to save the jobs.

Reporters made a public appeal to Bezos to "Save the Post," and fulfill what they said seemed like his mission to protect the paper's mission when he took over in October 2013 after buying it for $250 million. At the time, he promised to provide the paper with a financial "runway" and said owning the paper would be one of the things he would be most proud when he is 90 years old.

But his grandiose vision for the paper's future was met by a stark reality.

The *Financial Times* reported that the cuts at the paper last week were "one of the largest single-day cullings at a U.S. news organization in recent memory," and a "hammer-blow moment" for the paper and its staffers.

Marty Baron, the former editor-in-chief at the paper at the time Bezos purchased it, told the *FT* that he believed that Bezos's attempt to win over President Donald Trump may have helped kill the brand. (Bezos killed an op-ed to endorse Kamala Harris and was accused by *Newsweek* of spending $75 million on an "infomercial" called "Melania," a documentary about the First Lady.)

"People are disgusted," he told the paper. "No matter how great the reporting is, when people see [Bezos] up there with Trump, when they see Amazon paying a ridiculous price for a ridiculous documentary by Melania Trump, no matter what you're doing, a lot of readers are going to say: 'I don't trust this guy.'"

One source told the paper that Bezos has no intention to sell the paper, and that the cuts were intended to stop the financial bleeding. And while Bezos was open to new ideas to increase circulation, “everything they have tried has failed.”

NPR reported earlier this month that Bezos initially invested heavily into the paper, but the paper has been on a recent losing streak and now loses “tens of millions of dollars” a year. The report said staffers at the paper were told it lost $100 million in 2022, and $77 million in 2023. (See “DEATH OF JOURNALISM: BEZOS SET TO TAKE HATCHET TO WASHINGTON POST’S NEWSROOM” 3 Feb 2026.)

The paper looked into what sections were popular and what sections were losing readership, and found that the sports section, for example, was under performing, especially with its long-form content. The *FT,* citing unnamed sources, said the paper has been losing $100 million a year.

“If anything, today is about positioning ourselves to become more essential to people’s lives in what is becoming a more crowded, competitive and complicated media landscape,” Matt Murray, the paper’s executive editor, told staffers, according to *The New York Times.* “And after some years,*The Post* has had struggles.”

***TRENDPOST: The Trends Journal** has reported on The Death of Journalism, and while we agree with Baron that Bezos’s attempt to kiss Trump’s ass was a bad look, subscribers are tired of reading reports that are nothing more than government propaganda. (See “DEATH OF JOURNALISM: TOP ‘60 MINUTES’ PRODUCER RESIGNS, ANCHOR EXPLAINS” 29 Apr 2025, “DEATH OF JOURNALISM: BILLIONAIRES TRY TO INSTILL CONFIDENCE AS THEY BLEED READERSHIP” 17 Dec 2024, and “DEATH OF JOURNALISM: AP TO CUT 8 PERCENT OF STAFF AMID NEWS INDUSTRY UPHEAVAL” 26 Nov 2024.)*

The report, citing data from Morgan Stanley, said Bezos’s Amazon is gearing up to unload $200 billion in 2026, which will result in a “negative free cash flow” of about $17 billion and a deficit of $28 billion. The Seattle-based company could try to sell its debt to help fund the investments.

***The Trends Journal** is unique because we do not bend the knee to any political party and suffer financially as a result. Gerald Celente noted how YouTube viewers and (former) subscribers criticize his attacks on Trump, but leave out that he was just as tough on Genocide Joe Biden. But it is our bet that, in the long term, clear-eyed reporting on facts will always “trump” the propaganda as more people wake up.*

by Ben Daviss

ANTIBIOTIC PROMPTS GUT BACTERIA TO MAKE ANTI-AGING COMPOUND

Scientists at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute have been researching anti-aging compounds for some time and wanted to take their findings beyond the confines of their lab to see how people might make use of them.

They began to look at the diverse population of bacteria and other microbes living in animals' guts. The flora produces an array of useful biochemicals; maybe they could be tweaked to produce things that might retard or even reverse aging.

They began with cephaloridine, a broad-spectrum antibiotic. Researchers had noticed that roundworms given the drug lived longer than usual.

When the group exposed roundworms' gut bacteria to very low doses of cephaloridine, the drug prompted certain bugs to produce larger amounts of colonic acid, a compound the group had identified as having life-extending properties.

Roundworms aren't mammals. The researchers moved on to test mice with the same approach. Low doses of cephaloridine were seen to activate genes involved in making colonic acid, helping the mice age more slowly.

Treated mice showed higher levels of beneficial cholesterol and lower levels of the bad. In female mice, the amount of insulin in the blood also decreased.

Also, colonic acid taken orally doesn't break down or enter the bloodstream. It enters the gut and stays there, so the treatment showed no impacts elsewhere in the body.

TRENDPOST: *The experiment suggests that it could be possible to promote longevity by enhancing the actions of certain genes or the bacteria that already live in the body instead of trying to work on human cells.*

In industry, bacteria already handle jobs ranging from making pharmaceutical compounds to digesting explosives. In medicine gut bacteria could be altered to produce other life-extending or even life-saving substances.

"FIBER CHIP" COMPUTER IS AS THIN AS A THREAD

At Shanghai's Fudan University, engineers have solved a problem that has dogged wearables: how to shrink computing power so it can be small enough, and flexible enough, to be woven into fabrics.

The Fudan team has managed to make complex electronic circuits that are not only

flexible, but also slimmer than a hair. Just one millimeter of it, about three one-hundredths of an inch, contains 10,000 transistors and packs the capacity of a pacemaker.

Lengthen that to a meter, roughly 3.3 feet, and you could have 10 million semiconductors and the power of a desktop computer, the Fudan team said.

Each strand of their smart fiber incorporates resistors, capacitors and diodes and well as chips, giving the fiber the ability to process analog as well as digital signals.

In real-world testing, the smart fibers still worked after more than 10,000 times of being bent, brushed, bumped, and twisted. The thread stretched up to 30 percent beyond its normal length and its works survived more than 100 washings.

It also functioned normally after being heated to 100 °C, or about 212 °F, and squashed under pressure equivalent to being run over by a 15-ton truck.

Being so thin, flexible, and durable could make the fibers useful as medical implants in the body and even the brain, developers say.

“The human body is made of soft tissue, so emerging fields like future brain-computer interfaces demand soft, compliant electronic systems,” project leader and materials scientist Peng Huisheng told Xinhua, a Chinese news outlet.

The fibers could become part of diagnosis or treatments for Parkinson’s, epilepsy, and other brain conditions and be used as sensors. Smart gloves threaded with the fibers also could become the “skin” on robotic hands.

The fibers will soon be on their way to commercial markets. “Our fabrication method is highly compatible with the current tools used in the chip industry,” project team member Chen Peining said in a press statements. “We have already achieved a way to mass-produce these fiber chips.”

TRENDPOST: *It's easy to imagine the possibilities that fiber chips create including clothing that monitors your physical condition, heats or cools you according to the feel of your skin, and delivers the same kind of information about your surroundings that wearable glasses do. Potential medical and robotic uses are just as plentiful.*

Because the engineers already have designed a way to manufacture the fibers at scale, Beijing is likely to subsidize the material's production as one of president Xi Jinping's "new productive forces" that China can export to the world.

CHINESE ROBOTICS FIRM DISPLAYS "BIOMIMETIC" HUMANOID ROBOT

While many Chinese robotics developers focus on industrial designs or robots displaying superhuman feats of strength and endurance, Shanghai firm DroidUp has focused on a robot you'd like to have around the house.

Last week, the company put "Moya" on display.

The alluringly attractive robot stands 5'4" tall, weighs just 70 pounds, and has a body temperature just below humans' normal 98°F, making it seem even more like a person.

She's able to make and maintain eye contact, model subtle human facial expressions to match emotions, smile, wink, nod in agreement, and walk with a gait that is "92 percent" humanlike, DroidUp said.

She also is customizable in her appearance, the company noted.

While the bot responds to human voice commands, she does not speak.

Even speechless, though, Moya is one of the most advanced examples of “embodied artificial intelligence,” an AI in human form capable of appropriate human interaction.

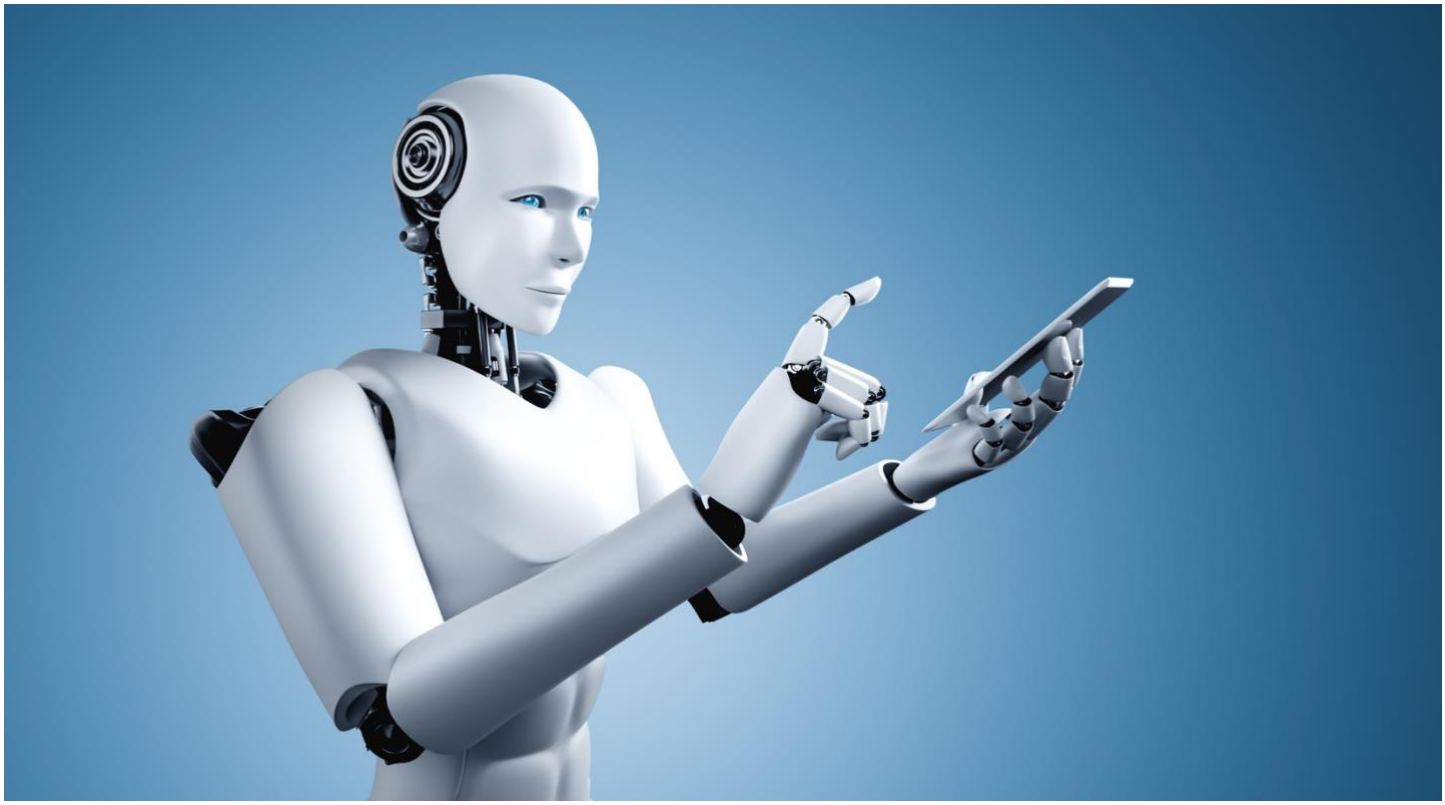
As useful as she might be as a companion for the elderly or people shut in with disabilities, DroidUp sees her as also having a role in education, healthcare, or other areas where the presence of a humanlike AI could be comforting or at least non-threatening. When Moya learns to speak, she will be able to instruct and inform in encouraging ways.

Reactions to Moya on Chinese social media were mixed. Some were fascinated by how much she resembled a human; others found her creepy, a reaction often voiced in response to something artificial that is almost, but not quite, human.

One viewer commented that she seemed like a good deterrent to burglars and nosy neighbors. Another wrote, “If she takes two steps toward me in bed at night, I’m throwing her off the balcony.”

Moya will go on sale later this year with an expected price of $173,000.

TRENDPOST: *Some users already have formed unhealthy attachments and dependencies on AIs that are only presences in cyberspace. To have one that seems so realistically human invites even more emotional investment, even if she can’t speak – yet.*



by Ben Daviss

WILL AI SCORE A 10 AS AN OLYMPICS JUDGE?

At this year's Winter Olympics, there will be a new presence at the judges' tables.

Two years ago, the International Olympic Committee announced its Olympic AI Agenda, which threads the technology throughout the games, from training athletes to judging to adding pizzaz to spectators' experiences.

This year, AI will help judges in the figure skating competition by counting the number of spins included during a jump. Bots may perform similar roles in skiing and snowboarding events, measuring the height of jumps.

In those events, as well as in gymnastics in particular, judges must dissect a complex series of movements performed in the blink of an eye and must do so for several hours a day. AI is increasingly being urged as a tireless tool not only to make precise measurements but also to eliminate inconsistency or unconscious bias among humans.

“Post-competition reviews show that unintentional errors and discrepancies between judges are not exceptions,” one journalist noted. Also, vote-trading among judges has created at least one scandal, another pothole that AI could eliminate.

However, AI suffers from its own limitations.

For example, a model trained on more male examples than female ones could rate females lower even though the performance skills were the same. It could make the same mistake if it was trained on taller people rather than short people.

Also, artistic expression in figure skating, gymnastics and similar events can factor into a human judge’s assessment of a performance, while AI might place a lower or even no value on that dimension.

“Earlier research on halfpipe snowboarding had already shown how judging criteria can subtly reshape performance styles over time,” a study on AI sports judging published in the journal *Information Systems Frontiers* noted.

“Unlike other judged sports, action sports place particular value on style, flow, and risk-taking, elements that are especially difficult to formalize algorithmically,” it pointed out.

In those cases, AI might not know how to judge a new trick it hadn’t seen before, an element that is especially valued among judges and fans.

TRENDPOST*: AI will play an important role in quantitative issues such as counting spins and measuring distances. However, because event judges are elite athletes in*

the sport they grade, humans will continue to rule, giving due weight to expression, creativity, and other subjective dimensions that AI can't measure.

LIFE IMITATES TECH: BRAIN PROCESSES MATCH THOSE OF AI, STUDY SAYS

It turns out that our brains build meaning from language in more or less the same way that AI does, according to a new study from Hebrew University.

The human brain has been thought to interpret language by applying a framework of hierarchical rules involving grammar and syntax to words, phrases, and sentences as a unit.

In contrast, an AI derives meaning from language in layers. Initial layers decode the meaning of words; deeper layers assemble those meanings together to frame a coherent idea.

To compare the human and digital processes, the researchers recorded detailed brain activity in people listening to a 30-minute podcast. The readings mapped the timing and locations of brain activity as language was being processed.

The recorded brain signals showed that initially words are processed in a basic way, much as AI interprets them. Deeper layers of the brain, such as Broca's area, are then enlisted to integrate the words' meanings into a unified structure of comprehension. That corresponds to AIs' way of putting together word meanings in deeper layers of processing.

“What surprised us most was how closely the brain’ unfolding of meaning [over time] matches the sequence of transformations inside large language models,” cognitive scientist Ariel Goldstein, who led the study, said in a press statement.

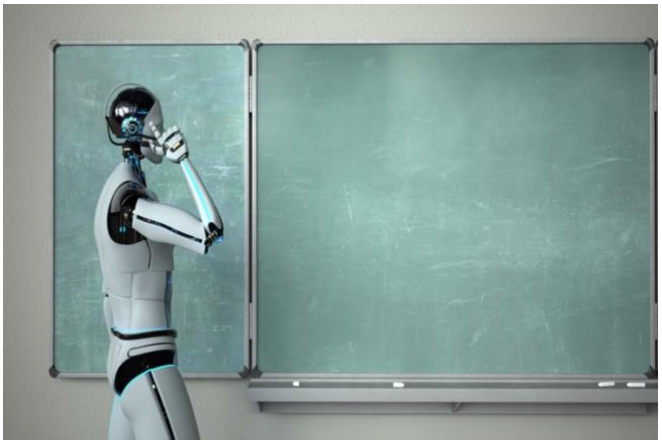
“Even though these systems are built very differently, both seem to converge on a similar step-by-step buildup toward understanding,” he added.

The study punches holes in the theory that our brains build meaning by putting together pieces of words like building blocks and shows instead they discover meaning from a more fluid and dynamic process.

The Hebrew researchers have opened the tools and details of their study to the wider research community. The freely available dataset can enable others to craft computer models that more accurately reflect how the brain understands language.

TRENDPOST: *The study’s tools and findings may help researchers gain insight into other aspects of the human mind. Perhaps our brains and AIs are more alike than has been assumed.*

MATH ANXIETY? THERE’S AN AI FOR THAT



Math anxiety is as common among students as smartphones. Compassionate, individualized support can overcome it but teachers with 20 or more kids in a classroom have little time to give to that effort.

More than a third of adults and children are victims of math anxiety, according to *Science* magazine. Students with the worst

cases of it can fall four years behind their peers who don’t suffer from the condition, studies have shown.

Now researchers at Adelaide University in Australia are suggesting that, with AI’s help, math learning can be redesigned to place the emotional component on an equal plane with skills development.

It’s possible to train AIs to recognize signs of students’ frustrations or disengagement, help them recognize the effect of past math traumas, and defuse those effects before they permanently rob the student of the chance to master math.

“Math anxiety is an emotional response characterized by fear, tension, and apprehension when a student is faced with a mathematical problem or test,” study leader and professor of education Florence Gabriel said in a statement. “In some cases, it can be so paralyzing that it limits a student's learning and performance.”

Anxiety in the face of mastering a complex subject, especially one like math that is based on abstractions, is normal, she added. However, “excessive math anxiety can lead to avoidance, reduced self-confidence, and a loss of control – even long-term aversion to mathematical learning.”

An effective AI can help students articulate and set realistic goals for themselves that build on their strengths – goals that actually motivate instead of deter them, the study found. The AI also can be trained to respond with encouragement when a student shows signs of frustration.

“AI can help students feel more competent and in control of their learning,” Gabriel noted.

To give fair weight to students’ emotional facet in studying math, the group made several suggestions. Among them:

- AI can adjust the level of difficulty of math-related tasks and problems to challenge a student while still granting a reassuring degree of success.
- AI can be trained to volunteer constructive, personalized guidance and suggestions when it sees signs of disengagement or frustration.
- Giving students a greater sense of control by enabling them to set individualized goals.
- Giving teachers a profile of each student's strengths and challenges so teachers can better tune their interactions with each student.

"Current AI models are trained to provide users with answers they're happy with, but this can bypass the cognitive processes of learning," study team member John Kennedy said in the statement. "When students rely on tools that simply generate answers, they only learn how to prompt the system rather than how to think through a problem."

AIs for math learning need to be redesigned from scratch, he contends, so they recognize the "emotional dimensions of learning."

"Effective educational AI should not only break problems into simpler steps but also tailor the type of hints it gives and the emotional tone of its responses to support positive attitudes to learning," he argues. "That might include recognizing delays in responses or patterns of hesitation during problem-solving. This requires a different approach to training the AI to that commonly used today."

The group has created an AI math tutor that offers a working example of the kind of digital coach they're describing.

TRENDPOST: *While math anxiety is a legendary presence in schools, anxiety over science, writing, and other disciplines isn't uncommon. The same approach, one that recognizes and addresses the emotional component of trying to learn a difficult subject, is necessary in every content area.*

ALPHABET, NOT OPENAI, “HAS THE HOT HAND” IN AI NOW

Seen as trailing the pack of AI competitors a year ago, Google parent company Alphabet has now taken a leading spot after its Gemini Model 3 AI received stellar reviews and the company is reporting AI is driving “revenue and growth across the board” with both business customers and individual consumers, CEO Sandar Pichai said in an earnings call last week.

That success will justify Alphabet’s almost doubling its capital budget this year to as much as $185 billion as it continues relentless expansion of its Google cloud infrastructure, he added.

Gemini’s enterprise version now has eight million paying licensees and its consumer app is now seeing more than 750 million monthly active users, company executives said, bringing it within striking distance of OpenAI’s ChatGPT with more than 800 million.

“We are also seeing significantly higher engagement per user, especially since the launch of Gemini 3,” Pichai noted.

OpenAI, long considered the leader in AI, has yet to be profitable, burned through an estimated $5 billion in cash last year, and will not be cash-flow-positive until 2029, CEO Sam Altman has projected.

Google's stunning jump in capital outlays initially spooked investors, who sent Alphabet share price down by as much as 6 percent. Later, Alphabet’s report of a 48-percent jump in December revenue from cloud operation buoyed investor confidence as well as the stock price.

Alphabet’s market ride has “further validated Wall Street's current message to tech companies: soaring AI spending can continue only if tech companies demonstrate commensurate financial returns,” Reuters said.

That analysis acquired more evidence when Microsoft’s stock took a drubbing in late January, in part because of its deep involvement with OpenAI. Microsoft said its capital expenditures in the current quarter will be less than the record $37.5 billion it spent in 2025’s final three months.

While Alphabet is showing growth from AI, rival OpenAI is showing chutzpah. It’s asking for another $40 billion from its suppliers in a new funding round that values the company at $750 billion.

“There's a narrative emerging where the market is favoring Google versus OpenAI,” Paul Meeks, chief tech researcher at Freedom Capital Markets, told Reuters, even though Alphabet’s capital budget is “eye-watering.”

“This time last year, every announcement by OpenAI to do business with somebody was applauded,” Meeks added. “Now people are saying, ‘Oh my god, too much of my revenue backlog or AI infra spending is coming from OpenAI’.”

Investors also are growing leery of companies such as Oracle, whose revenue projections are closely tied to OpenAI’s future profitability, Reuters reported. Oracle has more than $500 billion in contracts with OpenAI and has seen its share virtually halved in the past four months.

“The deals that OpenAI has with Microsoft and Oracle are highly tied to their ability to raise future funds,” portfolio manager Dan Morgan at Synovus Trust said to Reuters. “I think that is why you are seeing the street favor Alphabet.”

“If you are software and you are connected to OpenAI, you're doubly not intriguing to people,” Eric Clark, who manages the portfolio of the LOGO ETC, told Reuters.